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THE PRISONER IN THE DOCK

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MY FOUR YEARS' DAILY EXPERIENCES IN THE LONDON POLICE COURTS

BY

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(THE 'AMATEUR CASUAL')



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PREFACE

In the autumn of 1897 I was entrusted by the editor of the *Daily Telegraph* with a roving commission in connection with the police-courts of London.

The idea was not that I should fulfil the functions of an ordinary reporter, but that day by day I should go to whichever court I pleased, give special attention to the most interesting case that came before his Worship, and dish it up palatably for the reader's delectation.

I most readily accepted the commission in question, because, in the first place, it chimed exactly with my natural inclination to learn all that was to be learned of the habits and manners of impolite society, and, secondly, because it had often occurred to me, as I have no doubt it has to hundreds of other students of human nature, that one could not do better than apply at the police-courts if he were desirous of making close

inquiry into the ways and means, the temptations and inducements, the seemingly irresistible impulses of the many whose persistence in crime would make it appear that there are not a few who are 'born to the bad,' and can no more 'change their spots' than the leopard tribe can change theirs.

I can truthfully say that of all my many years of varied experience those of the past four years have revealed to me more than I had previously been aware of in connection with the seamy side of life in lower London.

It should not, however, be assumed that the daily business of the police-court is but a dreary repetition of the story of the misdoings of drunkards, wife-beaters, begging impostors, petty larcenists, pickpockets, and burglars, with an occasional spicing of bloodshed and murder. There is much more to be seen and heard in a police-court than, as a rule, is brought under public notice by the ordinary police-court reporter. It very frequently happens that the most interesting features of a case are those that, although merely incidental, serve as sidelights, revealing much that is almost marvellous as regards the better side of human nature in the midst of the mostly

bad, always including the love of woman that lives to the bitter end, and to the last is found pleading for mercy for the ruffian whose deliberate intent it has been to kill it by barbarous usage.

Nor is the humorous element rigorously excluded from the dramas of real life, for representation of which the Metropolitan police-courts serve as theatres. Laughter will occasionally leak out, however sternly discouraged by the usher. Comedy and, at times, even farce will elbow itself into the proceedings. Nay, there are certain courts where wit as well as wisdom are not infrequently heard in pleasing combination in the judicial utterances of the learned magistrates themselves.

Of such mixed material is the present volume composed, and I venture to promise that the reader will find in it much that is curious and amusing.

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CHAPTER I

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THE police-constable being the individual who is mainly responsible for the charges brought before the magistrate, he is entitled to first mention in these pages.

Considering the quality as well as the variety of the raw material out of which the Metropolitan Police Force is constructed and maintained, the result cannot be regarded as unsatisfactory. It is

but reasonable to assume that the great majority of the men who become policemen join the force because they can find nothing better to do. In the case of recruits from the agricultural districts, it may mean an increase of wages; but against this has to be set the difference in the cost of London living as compared with that of the country, not to mention the many temptations to increased expenditure inseparable from town life.

The pay of a police-constable on first joining is really not more than that of an ordinary labourer. A parish scavenger even is paid five shillings for a day's work of ten hours, or thirty shillings a week, and the newly-fledged constable will receive about the same amount, including the cost of his clothes, boots, etc.

His duties are not what may be called arduous, but to a man used to an active life they must—at all events until he becomes accustomed to them—be indescribably irksome. His walk on beat is a dreary dawdle, and must not exceed two miles an hour. In blazing summer-time he is not free to choose between the sunny side and the shady, and in rain, hail, or snow he must doggedly face the unkind elements.

It is, of course, so much the worse at night-time. By the rules of the service he is denied the solace of a pipe even in his dark and solitary perambulations, and he is even more strictly prohibited from indulging in a comforting nip from a pocket-flask. It was different in the good old times, when the publicans of every district in the Metropolis were on the best of terms with the night-policeman, and, their motives being possibly not altogether disinterested, provided habitually for his nocturnal comfort. The potman's last duty, after he had closed the house and adjusted the bolts and bars, was to place a pint of ale or a drop of rum or whisky in a little bottle in an agreed-on nook where the guardian of the night well knew where to look for it.

Such acts of generosity no doubt tended to promote a friendly feeling between the parties immediately concerned ; but the objectionable result was a semi-inebriated constabulary who could scarcely be expected to be as efficient as a corresponding number of men as to whose sobriety there could be no question.

But though the authorities prohibit indulgence in alcoholic stimulant by policemen, either on day or night duty, a kindly regard is manifested for

those on beat from dark till daylight in outlying and suburban districts. Constables so engaged are privileged to carry with them coffee, ready-made in a tin bottle, and a spirit-lamp, by means of which they may enjoy a hot and nourishing drink at a time when they most require it.

The young fellow who contemplates joining the force finds but little in the idea to stimulate his ambition or his patriotism. It is different with the individual whom nothing will suit but that he must go for a soldier. In his case there is the fascinating prospect of wearing regimental attire, and becoming a conspicuous and an admired object in the eyes of all his friends and relatives. There is no quicker way of emerging from social obscurity and changing from a nobody to a somebody. The aspirant to a military career has noticed the marvellous metamorphosis in young fellows of his acquaintance. Previous to enlisting they were mere items in the great fustian crowd, with no more individuality than any one sheep in a flock of ten thousand. They were his friends and intimates, and he lost sight of them for awhile —two or three months or so—and when he again set eyes on them they were not easy to recognise. Instead of walking with a slouching gait and with

a stoop in their shoulders, they were bolt upright, as though fitted up with a new spinal column, clear-complexioned, bright-eyed, and spick and span ; a credit to the British army in their braided tunics and their jaunty caps, perhaps with spurs at their heels and a natty little tasselled cane to swagger with. It is, of course, not improbable that their admirer, having himself enlisted, discovers that the marvellous change is not effected by a mere touch with a magic wand, and that before the transformation can be completed many severe spells of wearisome drill have to be endured ; but the splendid end attained, all that is soon forgotten.

But the most imaginative police recruit has no such allurement. If he has inquired into the matter at all, he knows that, unless favoured with extraordinary luck, it is only by slow and sure painstaking and careful attention to his duties he can hope, in the course of three or four years, to qualify himself for promotion, which may bring him three or four shillings more a week, and after he has seen probably some ten years' service, he is made a sergeant.

Meanwhile he plods on. Much depends on the district in which his division is situated as to business being brisk or the reverse. In the

quieter parts of the Metropolis a whole month will sometimes pass without his being called on to escort a single charge to the station, whereas in the more densely populated parts, especially should he be on night-duty, it may fall to his share to figure before the magistrate four or five times in the course of a week; and should it be his fate to be on duty in a district that includes such delectable localities as Brick Lane, or the slums of Bermondsey or the Borough, he may account himself lucky if a month passes without his appearing in the witness-box with a bandaged head or a sling to sustain an injured arm or shoulder.

Nor is it in cases involving serious crime that the policeman is most likely to meet with personal injury. Robbers who are crack hands at the craft, professional burglars, and others who may claim to rank with the 'society' class of criminals, seldom make any violent demonstration when they are unexpectedly pounced on and captured. The night-policeman's chief difficulty is having to deal with the drunken and reckless ruffian fraternity — the furious brute who, in the midst of his roaring and raving, goes mad should a constable lay a restraining hand on him, and does his savage best to maul

and maim his helmeted enemy, and not uncommonly he is a prodigiously strong brute. I have known four powerful policemen engaged in taking such a fellow into custody, and three out of the four gave their evidence in a crippled condition, and had been placed on the sick-list.

And here it is in place to remark on the infrequency of a constable using his staff for self-protection. As goes without saying, the reason why the men are provided with the weapon in question is to enable them to hold their own should they be violently attacked by a person who resists lawful arrest. It is seldom, however, that, unless urged to extremes, the London policeman resorts to his 'nut-cracker.' So long as a ruffian assaults him with his fists only, the average constable cannot forget his English instincts, and prefers to retaliate in similar fashion.

At Worship Street, or Thames Police Court, where on Mondays the number of charges usually ranges from fifty to seventy, it rarely happens that any of the whole batch have to complain (and should it occur they never fail to mention it) of the policeman having used his staff on them. And in the majority of instances when a prisoner appears in the dock with a broken and bandaged head,

the result of a blow from a truncheon, the constable who effected the capture has injuries equally severe to show, and which are not the less dangerous because kicks or bites have caused them. The men are not encouraged to use the weapon with which they are armed indiscriminately, and though, should a prisoner receive a knock on the head during a sanguinary scrimmage, it can seldom be shown that the blow was deliberate, though the prisoner and his witnesses are always ready to swear that such was the case.

The most gentle of magistrates will countenance the use of the truncheon in extreme cases. I once saw an awful ruffian brought before Mr. Plowden at Marlborough Street. Professionally he was a pugilist, but by avocation a costermonger, and two constables endeavoured to take him into custody for murderously assaulting a woman in the street. The hospital bandages that enveloped his close-cropped cranium betokened the severe punishment that had been inflicted on him; but on the other hand, of the two policemen who arrested him, one had a fractured knee-cap, and the other had sustained a loss of three front teeth, the result of a kick from prisoner's hobnailed boot.

'It is a wonder, yer Washup,' whined the ruffian in the dock, 'that my skull wasn't smashed like a cock-shy cokernut. That policeman hit me three times on the head with his staff deliberate.'

'That is not true, your Worship. I aimed at his shoulders, after he kicked me in the mouth, and hit his head instead.'

'You need not apologize, constable,' Mr. Plowden remarked blandly; 'such little accidents will happen. No doubt you did the best you could under the circumstances.'

Besides his drill, the police recruit has to be taught the proper formalities to be observed when he is before the magistrate, and in charge of a prisoner. First catch your culprit—and that to the constable new to his duties is often a far less formidable undertaking than entering the witness-box to address his Worship in reference to the charge preferred. It is the simplest thing in the world when you are used to it; but hard-worked magistrates are not invariably the most patient people in the world, and however ordinary witnesses may comport themselves, they expect that, in giving evidence, a constable shall be concise and to the point, so as to avoid wasting time. To this end the recruits, newly attached to a division,

for a specified time attend school day by day as punctually as Board-school pupils. As many as half a dozen of them may sometimes be seen seated unobtrusively at the back of the court, taking careful observation of their comrades of experience to whose testimony his Worship is listening. And after all, when it comes to his turn, he has to be mightily careful or his well-conned lessons will not avail him.

'At 12.30 last night, your Worship——'

'There is no such time of night,' is severely interposed from the judgment-seat. 'If you mean 12.30 this morning, constable, why don't you say so?'

And should the abashed transgressor at the same moment encounter the frowning glance of his inspector, whose box is immediately opposite, his discomfiture is for the time being complete.

For an inspector of the district division to be constantly present in court during the magisterial sitting is a comparatively modern arrangement. It is very necessary that he should be there to watch the proceedings generally; but the chief duty he has to perform is to check the 'time-cards' of the men of his division in attendance to give evidence.

Before the introduction of the time-card system the night-policeman had a harder time of it than he now has. If he took a person into custody overnight, instead of going to bed when his spell of duty was done, and enjoying a fair amount of rest right off, he had to turn out to be at the court at ten in the morning to prefer his charge against the prisoner. If he were lucky, his case might come on and be disposed of in a half-hour or so, or, in the event of there being a heavy list, it might be one o'clock before he was free to take his departure. But, however it happened, he got no recompense for the time deducted from that which should have been his own. The not unnatural consequence was that the constable on night-duty was leniently disposed to the least flagrant offenders that came under his notice, and by abstaining from taking them into custody gave himself a better chance of getting his off-duty time in full.

Then a change was made. It was represented at headquarters that the number of nocturnal peace-breakers was increasing, and at the same time it was suggested that the reason was that night-policemen had an interest in avoiding their arrest. The new regulation that came into force

was to the effect that the policeman on night-duty should be provided with a time-card. In the event of his having to attend the court next morning to prefer a charge, as soon as it was disposed of he (the constable) handed the card to his inspector, who notified on it the then hour and minute, and the difference between that and ten o'clock when the man arrived at the court was afterwards allowed him.

Nothing could be fairer, and the alteration gave perfect satisfaction—but not to everybody concerned. The already sufficiently busy magistrates have to suffer for it. Actuated possibly by a sense of gratitude for the boon conferred on them, the police of the Metropolis show their appreciation of it by such an increase of vigilance that in many districts the number of charges with which his Worship have daily to deal are nearly doubled, the increase consisting mainly of 'drunks and disorderlies' and other comparatively trivial misdemeanants.

CHAPTER II

ADVICE GRATIS

A prelude to the day's business at the police-court—Applicants mostly women—The same old story, 'I don't wish to hurt him'—Two sides to the advice-gratis question—The women get the best of it—'Your Worship, I have married a wrong un'—Mr. Plowden's advice to a shrew—The scavenger and his separation order—A sharp cure for fits—Alien applications—'I vant back my goods vat I gif my young vomans'—The romance of a hat and feathers.

NOTWITHSTANDING that 'three days' work and three days' rest' is the pleasant arrangement adopted by our Metropolitan magistracy, it cannot be denied that, generally speaking, when on duty their Worships do not have an enviable time of it.

Between ten o'clock and half-past, all preparations having been made, the usher in attendance demands 'silence,' and the magistrate enters and takes his seat on the 'bench,' as it is called, but is really a comfortable arm-chair.

But the 'dock' is as yet untenanted, and for the present the under-gaoler, who escorts prisoners to that disgraceful elevation, remains in the background. His Worship has first to perform the extra-judicial function of listening to 'applications.'

Strictly speaking, this means applications for summonses made by aggrieved persons who are desirous of compelling the individual against whom they make complaint to attend the court and answer the charge made against him.

But the applicants are not all desirous of taking process against somebody with whom they are at loggerheads. They come in a crowd. Not a mere half-dozen or so that might be dealt with in a few minutes, but in large numbers—thirty or forty sometimes—and they range in single file from the rear of the court to the box, to which the usher admits them in turn.

As a prelude to the real business of the day it is a tedious task and a depressing one, and is relieved only occasionally by glimmers of grim humour. It is in a sense a confidential conference. The public are not yet admitted to the rearward space allotted to them, and the magistrate's clerk is not present. It is not easy to

understand why that gentleman's services are dispensed with during the ceremony, but it is a fact that he never puts in an appearance until it is all over. There is one magistrate, Mr. Haden Corser, who during the ordeal disassociates himself from his judicial capacity by occupying an ordinary chair apart from his desk, but listens none the less attentively and sympathetically, because, as a rule, he sits with his legs crossed and his thumbs tucked in the armholes of his waistcoat.

The applicants are mostly women, and with the same woful old tale to tell and the same old question to ask—'How am I to bear with my brutal husband, who beats and ill-uses me?' One day a wretched-looking, poor creature made this inquiry of Mr. Corser sitting at Worship Street. She was in tears, and held a handkerchief to her face.

'Who gave you that black eye?' the magistrate asked her.

'Which one, your Worship?'

'The one you are looking at me with.'

'Oh, he did. This is last Tuesday's, but the one he give me last night is the wust.'

And, removing the handkerchief, the poor soul

revealed her other optic, which was in such a state that the magistrate hastily bade her cover it again.

'Does he often assault you?'

'Bless you! yes, your Worship. I've got my ribs bound up now; three weeks ago that was. I was taking off one of his boots when he was drunk, and, the lace being in a knot, I couldn't be quick enough, so he lunged out with his other foot and kicked me in the side, and broke one of my ribs.'

Mr. Corser: 'Well, you may take a summons for his last assault on you, and if it is proved against him I shall probably send him to prison.'

The wife with her two black eyes and a broken rib: 'But I don't want him sent to prison, your Worship. He isn't so bad to me when he is sober. I don't wish to hurt him. Couldn't you bind him over or something?'

'Take your summons and bring him here, and I will see what can be done for you.'

And as she turned to leave the box the usher offered her a summons order, but she put her hand behind her, at the same time muttering:

'Yes, 'tis likely I'll take it, ain't it?'

Not in the least likely. Why, it surpasses the

wisdom of man to understand. But it is in the nature of woman—of all women, no doubt; but, strangely enough, it develops in fullest force in women who have the least incentive to give it encouragement.

Take such an instance as that of the rib-breaking brute above quoted, and the wonder is that he was not so detestable in the sight of his long-suffering wife that she would gladly get him punished for ill-using her so. He may batter and bruise her until she is blind, or nearly, but she has 'no wish to hurt him.' In his savage moods he is merciless, but it was not always so. She remembers the time (she was not more than about five-and-twenty, so that it could not have been so very long ago) when his winning ways induced her to marry him, and he was kind to her for quite a long time after that. Even now, when he is sober, he is 'not so bad,' and it is at those times that the fading hope is revived within her that he will be to her again as he once was, and her long account of grievances against him are wiped out, and she is fond of him as ever, and continues so until, instead of her decent husband, a drunken savage one night comes home to her, and her eyes that would have brightened at sight

of him had he been his proper self are once more beaten black, and, made desperate by her sufferings, she applies once again to the magistrate for 'advice.' She may go even to the length of taking out a summons against him, but it is ten to one that the two shillings she has to pay for it is wasted. Soon as it is served the brutal coward whines for forgiveness, and, of course, she forgives him.

In dispensing gratuitous advice and counsel to poor and ignorant people a magistrate, no doubt, does a great deal of good, but it is just possible that occasionally he may do some amount of harm. As, for instance, it is a good many years since the laws regulating matrimonial responsibility were altered to the extent that a wife, finding it difficult to live on amicable terms with her husband, is at liberty to leave him; it is probable that not one woman in a dozen of the labouring classes is aware of it. She first hears of it when she applies to a magistrate on account of her husband's bad behaviour, and his Worship may suggest a drastic remedy.

'If you cannot live happily with him you are at liberty to leave him.'

'But that would be no good, your Worship.

He would be sure to come after me wherever I went, and insist on my living with him.'

'But he can't insist. Tell him that you have no intention of returning to him, and if he continues to annoy you, send for a policeman and give him into custody.'

And if the husband be really a good-for-nothing fellow the woman cannot do better than act on the magistrate's advice. But it is possible that the parties are equally at fault, or even that the husband may be jealous, and not without cause. In such case the woman may have a motive other than the surface one for availing herself of her newly-acquired knowledge, to her own discredit and her husband's injury.

It is the same, of course, in respect to husbands seeking magisterial counsel, but somehow they do not seem to derive the same amount of satisfaction from having their legal position defined.

As an instance, I was one day at Worship Street, when a respectable-looking man applied to Mr. Cluer to ascertain what peremptory proceedings he would be justified in taking to rid him of his wife, whose behaviour precluded the possibility of his living with her any longer in happiness and comfort.

'In what way does she misconduct herself?' the magistrate inquired.

'In what way, sir?' returned the applicant. 'Why, in every way. Only on Saturday night, or, rather, Sunday morning, she came home at two o'clock.'

'Well, that is not a matter for me to interfere with. Have you anything else to complain of?'

'Why, she comes home drunk.'

'I can't prevent that. Anything else?'

'Oh yes. It isn't more than a week ago that she stopped out till half-past one in the morning, and she wouldn't tell me where she had been.'

'Well, you can't make her tell you. If she refuses, and you have reasons for suspecting that what you can reasonably object to detains her, you should find out what it is.'

'Your Worship, on one occasion I did find out. My wife was locked up till two o'clock in the morning at the police-station, and it was through quarrelling with another woman, at whose house she was a visitor, and who caught her in the passage and in the dark kissing her husband. I looked over that, and that will show you the sort of wife she is.'

'If you forgave her, it is no use referring to it. You are not compelled to live with her.'

'Thank your Worship. That's what I wanted to know.'

'But if you leave her you are bound to support her.'

'And if I don't leave her, am I bound to let her in, whatever time she comes home?'

'Yes. Do you never stay out late yourself?'

'Never after twelve o'clock.'

'Well, some wives consider that late, but they do not usually shut the door against their husbands at that hour.'

'And if I leave her I shall have to support her. How much, your Worship, should I have to give her?'

'That depends on the amount of your income. If a man has a good income, about a fifth should be apportioned to his wife; but it depends on circumstances.'

As the disappointed husband turned away, it appeared from his perplexed expression of countenance that he was already deep in arithmetical calculations making out what a fifth would amount to, and revolving whether it would be better to bear with the ills with which he was already

afflicted, or render himself virtually a widower and pay so much out of pocket all the same.

To marry in haste is a folly to which the labouring classes are much more addicted than folks whose present means and future prospects appear to justify their launching on the always more or less uncertain sea of matrimony. Nor is it inexplicable that it should be so. At first thought it may seem little less than an act of insanity on the part of a young couple whose times of leisure during the three or four months they have been acquainted have admitted of their enjoying each other's society but a few hours in each week to resolve to become husband and wife for the remainder of their lives.

It is with them only a question of ways and means. It is just because they have always had to be content with so little that they are disposed to fearlessly face the future, feeling confident that mutual goodwill and cheerful endeavour will enable them to pull through, and eventually reward them with a comfortable home.

And this is feasible enough, admitting the imperative condition that they are sensible young people, both willing to yield reasonably in matters of domestic debate, with no mule-headed obstinacy

on either side. In very many cases the newly-wedded pair know scarcely anything of each other's temper or disposition. In their brief period of sweethearting they have always been, so to speak, on their Sunday behaviour, and very shortly after the honeymoon there is usually not a little to be discovered as regards their individual likes and dislikes and small weaknesses. In such cases, if both are stubborn, there ensues what the Irish call 'ructions.'

Such a case came before Mr. D'Eyncourt at North London Police Court, when a young husband sought magisterial counsel as to what he was to do with his rebellious young wife. She treated as naught the promise she made at the altar to honour and obey him and set him openly at defiance, making his life a misery. It is probable, of course, that there were faults on both sides, but the pith of the husband's grievance was contained in the first half-dozen words he addressed to the magistrate.

'Your Worship, I have married a wrong un!'

This terse impeachment, of course, required explanation, and the applicant proceeded to details.

'I have been married only four months, your Worship, and she hasn't kept her word in anything.'

'How has she failed?'

'I'll tell your Worship. When we were courting and talking about getting married, we agreed, among other things, that she was always to get up first and make the kettle boil while I toasted the bacon.'

'And does she now insist on toasting the bacon while you attend to the kettle?'

'No, your Worship. She flatly refuses to do either one or the other.'

'What does she do, then?'

'She lies abed while I get my own breakfast, and when I tell her to get up she threatens to do all manner of things to me.'

'Is that the worst she does?'

'Oh no. The other night she started breaking up the home, and when I interfered she threatened to knife me. After that she left me alone and went and slept with the landlady. Again, last Tuesday, she went out and came back at midnight, and when I complained she went out again, and stayed out till one in the morning. The other night, without telling me she was going, she went to Sadler's Wells with another woman. I was abed and asleep when they came home, and they woke me up and abused and threatened me.'

'It appears to me that you married a woman of whom you knew very little. How old is she?'

'Nineteen.'

'And you?'

'Twenty-two.'

The magistrate remarked that the best advice he could give the young man was for him to get out of the apartments he at present occupied, and, having found lodgings elsewhere, invite his wife to join him there. If she refused to do so, after waiting a reasonable time, he should have no more to do with her.

The young man did not inquire, 'But suppose she does join me there and goes on as bad as ever, what am I to do then?' yet from the expression on his face as he quitted the applicants' box it seemed as though he had some such probability in his mind.

The intricacies of matrimony are many, and a magistrate needs at times to be endowed with the wisdom of Solomon in giving advice to the parties applying to him. The two cases next quoted are typical.

Merged in a maze of difficulty, an injured wife came to Mr. Dickinson sitting at Thames Court

for his advice. According to the woman's statement, her husband had been convicted of bigamy at the Central Criminal Court, but sentence on him was deferred on condition that he made arrangements to pay his wife fifteen shillings a week for her maintenance. These terms she had complied with, and her husband came back and lived with her. He stayed, however, only a short time, and then left her, allowing her three shillings a week only, and, to make matters worse, she had reasons for believing that he had taken up his abode again with the party with whom he had committed bigamy.

In answer to the magistrate, applicant declared that she had given her husband no excuse for so cruelly deserting her, but an officer in court put a different complexion on the matter. He had, he said, seen the man on the subject, and he had given as a reason that he found it impossible to live with his lawful wife under the new arrangement; he was quite willing to do so, but she made his life a misery. If he went home in the least out of spirits, she at once began at him, attributing his melancholy to his pining after his second choice, and if he came home in a pleasant mood it was worse still; for then she accused

him of having been enjoying the society of the woman he liked better than her.

Applicant indignantly denied this, but the magistrate remarked that, under the circumstances, the best advice he could give her was to go to her husband, and ask him to come back to her, and, if he refused to do so, she might then apply to him for a summons for desertion.

A husband, brimming over with a grievance, was the very next to apply for advice in respect to his wife, who refused to live with him.

'Look 'ere, yer Worship, I want you to gimme a bit of advice. Some time ago I was before you and you gimme a month.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'I don't quite remember. Was it for ill-using your wife?'

'Well, yes, it were. So when I come out I goes home, and I goes up to our room, and she wasn't there. So I ses to the landlady, "Where is she?" and she ses, "She don't live here now. The room is let to somebody else." So I goes out, and there I see my young uns playing in the street, and they told me their mother hadn't moved. More she had. She'd only moved out of one room into another in the same house.'

'Oh, that's a very different matter. I know that he is at work at two o'clock in the afternoon. What I should like to know is, what is he up to when he stays out till two in the morning?'

'Well, I tell you what I should do if I were you.'

Applicant, putting her head forward attentively: 'What would you do, sir?'

Mr. Plowden: 'I should ask him.'

'Ask him! I'm sick of asking him. I put my head out of the window and asked him when he came home at two this morning, and the reply he made was, "Come down and open the door, and I'll tell you."'

'And of course you went down?'

'No, I didn't. I banged the winder down, and told him to go to where he came from.'

'And he went, I suppose? If he did you mustn't blame him. Was it long before he returned?'

'He didn't return at all, and what I want to know——'

'Yes, my dear madam, you said that before. You want advice, and the best I can give you is to find your husband as soon as you can, and apologize to him for your outrageous behaviour

in shutting him out of his own house. Next applicant, please.'

'Please, your Worship, I want a summons agin my wife for refusing to give me a receipt for money I pay her on a separation order she got agin me. I take it to her myself, and hand her the money and the receipt paper, and the one she takes and the other she chucks at me.'

'Well, you needn't trouble about that. You can't be made to pay twice. Anything else?'

'Yes, your Worship. Would you be so kind as to lower the amount of the 'lowance?'

'On what grounds? What was your position when the order was made?'

'A parish street-sweeper.'

'And what is it now?'

'Oh, jest the same, sir.'

'And are you earning the same wages?'

'Yes.'

'Then the order must remain as it is.'

'Ah, but, your Worship, I am a good bit older and weaker than when it was first made.'

'Of course you are. We are all growing older and weaker. If it is your intention to come here periodically with the same reason for a further reduction the poor woman, who is probably

growing older and weaker too, will get nothing at all from you by-and-by.'

'Ah, but, your Worship, me growing older and weaker means that before long I shall break down altogether, and have to go into the work-house; then she won't get nothing.'

'I see. Then your humane idea is that, if your wife's allowance is meanwhile gradually reduced, she will not feel the shock so much when it is stopped altogether? But you will have to be satisfied with the existing arrangement at present, at all events.'

Next applicant appeared in shape of a strong and able young fellow whose age may have been twenty. He deferred reply to the magistrate's question, 'What do you want?' while he took from a wrapping of brown paper a carving-knife which he held up to magisterial view, at the same time shaking his head as though indicating that that was what he did not want, though he had had a narrow escape from getting it.

'Why do you bring that knife here? What has it to do with your application?'

'Everythink, your Worship. This is what my father took up to murder me with.'

'And did he make a beginning?'

'He would have done, but mother took it away from him.'

'But how had you offended your father that he wished to murder you?'

'I never did nothing at all to him. It's all on account of my being subject to fits.'

'And do you mean to tell me that it is only because you have the misfortune to be subject to fits that your parent has bloodthirsty designs against you?'

'That's all, your Worship. Being subject to fits, it's no use my looking for work, because work brings 'em on. That's why he is savage against me.'

'I see. You don't do any work, and your father has to support you. He does not altogether believe in the fits, perhaps, but he has not assaulted you yet.'

'No, but he got somebody else to do it. I was punched on the head by a man in the street —he was one of a lot of 'em that was there—and of course it was father who set him on to do it. I want a summons agin him for that, and for offering at me with the carving-knife as well.'

Mr. Plowden made no verbal response, but meaningly shook his head. Possibly his Worship

thought that in the young man's unfit condition the fatigue of appearing at the court to prosecute his father might bring on another fit.

Not a few of the applicants for advice gratis, especially at courts situated in those districts that swarm with an alien population, are young men, foreigners, who since their settlement in London have been smitten by the personal charms of the damsels of the locality where they reside, and have made overtures of marriage to them. It would appear, however, that the mercenary young creatures not unfrequently only pretend to accept the said proposals, because they are aware that it is a custom with foreign swains to commence to make the lady of their choice more or less valuable presents as soon as a matrimonial arrangement is arrived at. This, of course, should tend to a more secure binding of the contract. That such is not the case, however, is not uncommonly illustrated in the applications made to the magistrates by disappointed aliens who have been heartlessly jilted and who seek advice as to the best means of recovering the presents they have been beguiled into making to the arch-deceivers.

Judging from the emotion displayed by one young gentleman who made application to Mr.

Dickinson sitting at Thames Court, he had probably received his rejection that very morning, or at all events late the previous night.

'Your Vorship, I vant my goots back vat I gif a young voman.'

'Have you asked her to return them?'

'I haf many time asked her, your Vorship.'

'And what answer does she make you?'

'She say she see me hang first.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'But who is the young woman? You have been keeping company with her, I suppose?'

'That is so, your Vorship.'

'And the articles in dispute are presents you have given to her?'

Applicant: 'That is so; but first she sign a paper promising that she would hav me. This is the paper, your Vorship—signed by the lady, and vitnessed by her mother.'

'It is no use showing me the paper; that has nothing to do with your application. What was it you gave her and wish her to return to you?'

'Soon as she sign the paper ve go for a valk, and I buy her a gold vatch.'

'Very generous on your part. Anything else?'

'Then anoder time I make her present of a brooch, and one other time a ring.'

'A wedding-ring, do you mean?'

'No; a ring with jewels in it.'

'You gave the things to her?'

'Yas, I gif, but vy? Ven I marry her I get my things back vith her, but it vill not be. The last thing I buy her vas a hat and fedders vat she took a fancy for in a vinder.'

'And she will wear it on the day she is married, no doubt?'

The applicant breathed hard and grated his teeth together ere he replied to the magistrate in tragic tones:

'Yas, she vill be married in it, no doubt, but not to me. She look so nice in the hat vat I buy her that some other chap fall in love vith her, and now she don't vant me.'

'Has she told you so?'

The distressed young foreigner sobbingly answered, 'Yas.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'Well, really, I am sorry for you, but I don't see how it is to be helped. It is all for the best, perhaps.'

'For the pest! Vat! the pest to lose the gold vatch——'

'But you gave her that and the other things; they are hers.'

Applicant (clutching his hair): 'Yas, they all pelong to her, and she pelongs to him! Very goot! Vell, ve shall see.'

And in a decidedly dangerous state of mind the jilted lover left the court.

It was next to impossible not to pity the sorrows of the poor young man, likewise a foreigner, whose faltering steps had brought him to the court to seek advice as to how he was to compel his wayward sweetheart to marry him.

'Pardon me, your Worship. My young woman and me keep company eighteen months, and we talk about marriage.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'Nothing more natural.'

'Yes, and I prepare for it. I save my money and buy furniture—I spend twenty-five pound that way—and as I buy I send the things to her mother to mind.'

'Well, if the time has arrived, why don't you get married?'

'Your Worship, she won't. Three times she has promised, and she won't. I have got her handwriting that she will next week, and now she won't.'

'What does she say?'

'She say she will marry when she likes.'

'Well, I can't order it otherwise.'

'Ah! but the furniture, your Worship?'

'Yes; that is safe, I suppose?'

'Yes, safe. The daughter will marry me when she please, and the mother will charge me for storing my furniture.'

'Do you still wish to marry her?'

'Oh yes.'

'Then make an appointment, and go for a nice walk, and have a sensible talk with the lady. No doubt, with a little persuasion, she will yield.'

'But the furniture, your Worship?'

'Oh, if you can persuade her to marry you, no doubt you will be able to come to an understanding with her mother about that.'

And, seemingly not much comforted, the distressed young alien bowed politely to his Worship and left the court.

Still another sweethearting entanglement in which British and foreign interests clashed, but this time it was a young Englishman who was the aggrieved individual.

'Please, your Worship, I want Jacob Zulinski bound over.'

'But perhaps Jacob might object,' remarked Mr. Dickinson smilingly. 'What has he been doing to you?'

'Well, it ain't so much what he has done: it's what he threatens to do. What's it got to do with him which of his two sisters I keep company with?—that's what I want to know.'

'Well, I can't tell you. As a brother, he may have private and particular reasons. I should say it was a question for the young women themselves to decide.'

'Ah, but, my Worship, it lays this 'ere way: It's Esther I'm sweet on, and Rachel—that's her sister—she says if I don't marry her I shan't marry anybody, and her brother takes her part and ses the same. He said it again no longer ago than last night. "If you want to marry into our family," he ses, "you've got to marry Rachel, and if you conterdick me, I'll knock your bloomin' head off." And,' added the young man dolefully, 'he's a fighting man—that's the worst of it.'

'Well, if I were you, I should decline to marry into the family, and keep my head on my shoulders.'

'Ah, but don't you see, my Worship, the wedding things is bought, and some of the furniture.'

'And who has got that?'

'Well, at present Rachel has, and she won't give it up.'

'Did she agree to mind the things for her sister?'

'No, your Worship; she was minding 'em for herself. That was before we had a row.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'Ah, that puts a different complexion on the affair. You have been courting Rachel, and you bought the furniture with a view to marrying her?'

Applicant (sheepishly): 'Yus, your Worship.'

'And you quarrel with the young woman, and want her to give back the things you bought that you may marry her sister instead?'

Applicant (doggedly): 'Well, wot's it got to do with her brother?'

Mr. Dickinson: 'Well, he seems to think it his duty to interfere, and I am inclined to agree with him. You need no advice from me. But I may tell you that if you persist in your unmanly intention it will be wise on your part to steer clear of brother Jacob.'

CHAPTER III

CRIME IN THE CRADLE

Compulsory education and the morals of children—Highwaymen in knickerbockers—Aged ten, and three times birched—Girl thieves in the cattle-market—Picking pockets after school hours—Who are the child-thief's trainers?—Mistaken policy of remanding accused boys to the workhouse—Romantic story of Master Adams—Mother murdered, and father a felon—The strange experiences of little 'girl-boy' Troutbeck.

UNSATISFACTORY and disappointing though it must be, it would seem to be beyond denial that compulsory education has not done as much as was expected towards improving the morals of the children of the lower classes. It would appear as though the Board-school grindstone, while it develops the scholarly abilities of those who are disposed to be well-behaved, has the disastrous effect of putting a keen edge on the wit of youngsters whose cleverness, shrewd cunning, and

a perverse inclination to prefer wrong to right is inextricably blended.

This, unfortunately, receives almost daily confirmation at the police-courts. Making due allowance for an increased population, it is simply true that at the present time a greater number of juvenile offenders are charged before the London magistrates than was the case ten or fifteen years ago. Nor are the offences they commit mere childish peccadilloes, but not unfrequently crimes of a character that practised adults are addicted to. One might well suppose, at all events, that the boots worn by a little boy in winter weather would be safe from the thievish designs of other little boys of about his own age. Countless instances might be quoted to the contrary. Here is one that came before Mr. Cluer, sitting at Worship Street :

Alfred Davis, whose age was not more than six or seven, attended the Board-school in Bucks Row, Whitechapel, and a day or two before little Davis and two equally small schoolmates, being at the time almost barefoot, were presented each with a pair of new boots. They were together and running home from school one wet and muddy afternoon, never dreaming of highway-

men, when three boy-robbers, Fred Rigleth and two companions, who had been lurking in an alley, suddenly pounced on them. Each robber selecting his victim, the three little boys were knocked down, and, while prostrate, deprived of their new boots.

The three juvenile desperadoes got clear away with their booty, and probably would never have been brought to justice but for their own imprudence. Made reckless by their success, they were at the same spot a few evenings afterwards, and lurking in the same alley against the time the infant children came out of school. Presently they recognised little Davis, and he them, and on his raising an alarm the three thieves ran off, but were pursued, and the boy Rigleth was captured. Before the magistrate he pleaded guilty, but stubbornly refused to give any information respecting his 'pals.'

Another instance. William Wrampling, aged ten, was brought up at North London Court charged with highway robbery. William was a chubby and innocent-faced little chap, but, as presently appeared, a practised thief, and a most impudent one. How he could have qualified for the avocation was a puzzle. One not unfrequently

hears of misguided youths who become addicted to dishonest practices through persistent perusal of pernicious literature, but, unless there are one-syllable editions of 'Jack Sheppard' and 'Sixteen-string Jack,' it could not have been from such sources that he derived baleful instigation.

There were two charges against him. In the first a German bootmaker gave evidence that a few days previously he sent his little son, whose age was twelve, to deliver thirteen pairs of boots, the value of which was £1 19s. On the way he was robbed of them by another boy, who got clear away with the booty. And nothing would probably have been heard of the stolen property but for the bold highway-boy engaging in another exploit.

A lad placed in the witness-box swore that the previous day he was in Mare Street, Hackney, when he heard a little girl screaming, and on inquiring what was the matter, he was told that she had been robbed of sixpence, and that a boy seen running in the distance was the thief. The lad gave chase, and succeeded in capturing the accused, who made no denial when he was accused of the robbery. He owned to it, and in the same breath made overtures for 'squaring' the matter.

'All right,' he said; 'I took the sixpence. Here it is, mate, and here's threepence for yourself if you will let me go.'

His captor, however, was not to be bribed, and, given into custody, William was identified as the boy who had stolen the thirteen pairs of boots the day before.

With his hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers the infant prodigy had listened with a countenance expressive of amused interest to the evidence against him. On being asked if he had anything to say, he replied coolly:

'Oh yes, it's all right about the gal's sixpence; I ain't goin' to deny that.'

'And what as to the thirteen pairs of boots?'

'What do you mean? What about 'em?'

'Did you steal them? Did you take them away from the boy who was carrying them?'

To which the dreadful child made answer, first closing his eyes for a few seconds as though to assist his memory:

'Not as fur as I can remember.'

It presently transpired that William Wrampling, aged ten, had already been birched twice for similar offences, and he was ordered a third dose

of the same curative, and afterwards to be sent to an industrial school.

And do the police-court records bear witness to little girls being as terribly precocious in the ways of crime as little boys? Alas for the influence of Board-school morality! it cannot be denied, as was instanced in the case of Elizabeth Pond, aged eleven, Alice Greer, the same age, and Edith Bains, fourteen, who were charged before the Clerkenwell magistrates with picking pockets in the Metropolitan Cattle Market.

The offence alleged against them was that they were engaged together in stealing from the dress-pocket of a lady unknown a purse containing £1 1s.

As is pretty generally known, the Metropolitan Cattle Market at Islington is one afternoon in the week turned into a sort of gigantic bazaar, where hundreds of dealers in second-hand household furniture and clothing and miscellaneous oddments of every imaginable kind display their wares, attracting a large crowd. The three girls in question were there, and so was Constable 417 Y.

He was in plain clothes, and in the midst of the crowd, when their suspicious movements drew

his attention to Bains, Pond, and Greer. Apparently they were in quest of pockets to pick. They were going about their business quite in a professional way. Miss Greer, aged eleven, was the operator. In view of the constable, while covered by the other two, she dipped into the pocket of a lady's dress and drew forth a purse, which she handed to Bains; but at the same moment, catching sight of the constable, whom she probably recognised in spite of his disguise, she warned her companions, and all three ran away.

The constable pursued and caught them, when Bains dropped the purse. They were taken into custody, and on the way to the station Greer (who was spoken of by the police as an expert and clever young thief) produced from her pocket a handful of loose silver, which she gave him, at the same time remarking:

'I did you last Friday. I had five purses then.'

When searched at the station, a purse containing £3 5s. was found on the elder girl, and Greer had two empty purses in her possession.

But the lawless young rascals who infest the streets of London are not all of the ragamuffin brood that set at defiance the School Board and

all its officers and lead an untamed and roving life, knowing no more of reading and writing than so many young Zulus born and bred in the wilds of South Africa.

It is a fact as astonishing as it is unintelligible, and proved by repeated instances, that urchins barely in their teens will attend school morning and afternoon with some sort of regularity, and devote their evenings, and presumably their holiday times, in setting out in gangs of three or four perhaps a mile or two from the neighbourhood where they are known, their purpose being to practise picking and stealing in quite a methodical and professional way.

An instance of the kind came before Mr. Rose at West London Police Court, when two little urchins, aged nine and ten, and named John Atkins and Thomas Martin, were charged with picking a lady's pocket and robbing her of her purse containing eight shillings.

Prosecutrix gave evidence that she was making some purchases at a store in Hammersmith, when she missed her purse. She had not observed anyone near her whose movements had excited her suspicion. A witness of the robbery explained to the magistrate how the robbery was effected.

He saw the two boys enter the stores, and watched them. There were several ladies at the counters, and he observed the little boy Martin, whose age was nine, try the pocket of one lady, and, being unsuccessful, he next put his hand between the folds of prosecutrix's dress, his ten-year-old confederate standing close and 'covering' his companion quite in a professional way. Witness guessed that they had got something, from their hurried way of taking their departure, and followed them to the back premises of a public-house, to which they adjourned to examine the booty. They were in the act of doing so, when, suspecting they were watched, Martin dropped the purse, and the two were making off, when witness secured the younger pickpocket, and took him, with the purse in his possession, to the police-station, where prosecutrix identified her property.

In reply to the magistrate, an officer stated that both prisoners were known. Atkins had a sister who had been placed in a reformatory, and Martin had been punished for theft with a birch-rod flogging. The magistrate remanded both juvenile delinquents to the workhouse that inquiries might be made.

It is difficult to believe that such mere children turn to stealing of this kind of their own option, and practise it until they are perfect without someone behind to encourage and urge them on. There must, of course, be a beginning, a consideration of the matter, a screwing up of courage and a first desperate attempt, and how does all this come about?

It is inconceivable that two or three little schoolboys, being likewise play-companions, however unruly and bad-behaved, should one day, while taking a walk, discuss the subject and earnestly league together to provide for themselves plenty of spending-money by going about picking people's pockets. That, being lawlessly disposed, they should agree to stick together and engage in such small pilfering exploits as robbing an orchard, or even in snatching fruit from street stalls, would not be very astonishing, but picking pockets is quite another matter. System is essential to that sort of plundering, and that can only be acquired through the teaching of an experienced practitioner.

Who is he, and how does the pernicious scoundrel contrive to get hold of urchins of the daring and reckless sort who will listen to

his suggestions? He takes the lion's share of the iniquitous proceeds, and is never far off while the plunder is being obtained. No doubt that, generally speaking, it is a safe game as well as a profitable one. In a crowd on a thronged pavement, or in a busy bazaar or store, no one takes particular notice of two or three youngsters pushing their way through, and even should a small delinquent's hand be felt suspiciously close to a person's pocket, in five cases out of six the culprit would be permitted to escape with a box on the ear.

Now and again it happens that a lout of fifteen or sixteen is arrested along with the younger boys, and when that is so it may be taken for granted that he is the only really guilty rascal, the others being but the tools he works with. In all such instances the most searching inquiry should be made, and if instigation can be proved against him, a double, or even a treble, dose of birch should be his portion, together with a stiff term of imprisonment. Such stringent treatment would no doubt check a crime that of late has increased alarmingly.

It commonly happens that when a magistrate is in doubt as to how to deal with a juvenile

culprit brought before him he remands him for a week, not to prison, but to the workhouse, and in most cases the result of such postponement is that the boy is discharged on his father agreeing to be bound over in a small sum to answer for his future good behaviour. But as regards the preliminary workhouse detention, this is not as it should be. Arrived at the parochial establishment, the youthful culprit is not shut up in a cell, nor is he kept solitary and companionless until required again to appear before the magistrate. He is treated much the same as if he were an ordinary boy-pauper inmate. But if boys proved guilty of crime are systematically sent to the workhouse for temporary detention some system should be devised the working of which does not compel the poor boy inmates, whose only fault is their poverty, to accept such companionship, whether it is agreeable to them or otherwise.

That it is likely to be injurious there can be no question. Take this case of the little lad who misappropriated his master's money. On his own confession he is a thief, and the circumstances leave no doubt that is a very artful one, and capable of deceiving even his father and mother, who should know more than anyone of his

ways and habits. It can scarcely be said that, until proper correction in some form or other has been applied to him, he is fit for the society of honest lads of his own age, and many of them much younger.

Yet, unless the workhouse to which he is consigned is conducted on principles different from the majority, this will be the kind of company he will keep. At the best of times the life of a London workhouse boy is anything but an enviable one. How many thousands of them there are is known only to the curious in respect to Poor Law statistics. It is a melancholy life most of them lead, poor little chaps! They have their day-ward and their night-dormitory, and while occupying the former they are, generally speaking, looked after by some trustworthy elderly pauper who notoriously will 'stand no nonsense.' Clothed in clay-coloured corduroy, rigidly of one cut and pattern, they are ranged on long forms, and take their meals under the supervision of this guardian, who takes care that nothing in the nature of larking goes on. He is their drill-master, and superintends the few games they are permitted to indulge in. At many workhouses the boys are sent to the nearest Board-school, and the same

grim custodian marshals them thither, all in a row, and is punctually on the spot to marshal them back again.

With such a monotonous life to lead it is easy to understand how eagerly a boy on remand from a police-court is likely to be received among them, especially should he happen to be a braggart as well as a bad boy, who will give his out-of-the-world audience a highly-coloured account of his own exploits, and how he contrived and carried them through. No doubt there are little lads on remand too penitent or miserable to boast or to entertain an audience in any way; but there are many of them, and it must happen again and again that one gets among them who does far more harm than, with all his vigilance, the wardsman can be aware of.

It cannot be any other than true, as regards the criminal fraternity and their offspring, that what is bred in the bone must come out in the flesh, but it seldom happens that in cases of robbery committed by children brought to the notice of police magistrates that the parents are shown to be cognizant of the felony. Now and again, however, an undeniable 'chip of the old block' makes appearance in the dock.

A very curious story was revealed to Mr. Mead, sitting at Thames Court, the subject being Arthur Adams, aged thirteen, charged with being found homeless and wandering.

His aunt, who was present, gave Master Adams but an indifferent character. He had, she said, been a pretty good boy until the last year and a half, when be began to grow unruly, and to show a disposition to follow in his father's footsteps. He seemed unable to keep his hands from picking and stealing, played truant, stayed out late at night, and behaved himself disgracefully generally. Her own little girl had come home one day and told her that Arthur, who was with her, had been trying to steal a piece of bacon, and though he had not succeeded, he told her that he meant to have another try. She beat him for it, and he declared that he did not care, and that he meant to be a thief. Afterwards he assaulted his young cousin with a chair for 'sneaking' on him.

But what better could be expected of a poor little wretch whose mother had been murdered and whose father was a felon?

Such was unfortunate Arthur Adams' parentage. The circumstance attending his mother's death created considerable sensation at the time. Between

six and seven years ago the woman was found lying on the floor of a public-house in Limehouse, stabbed to the heart, and by her side was a man in whose breast a wound had been made, according to medical testimony, with the same weapon. The woman was unable to speak, but the man made a statement to the effect that it was the woman's husband who had done the deed. He had found them together, and, in a fit of jealousy, stabbed them both.

The woman was named Adams, and her husband was known to the police as a bad character, who for years past had spent most of his time in gaol. It was supposed that he was at liberty at the time, although he had not been home to his wife, and, bearing on the wounded man's assertion, a witness from the public-house was produced who was prepared to swear that a man answering to Adams' description was seen to leave the place hurriedly just before the crime was discovered.

The woman died, and the police circulated such a description throughout the kingdom as was likely to lead to the arrest of the supposed murderer. Fortunately, however, the said description fell into the hands of a warder of a

prison at Bristol, and he immediately recognised it as applying to a man who had been for some time in the gaol where he was engaged. He gave information, and it was proved that the man was Adams, and that therefore he was innocent of the crime of which he was suspected.

Suspicion then fell on the man who was found wounded by the woman's side, and he was charged with the offence. The one thing in his favour, however, was that the knife with which the stabbing had been done could not be found. A pocket-knife was discovered in a pocket of the clothes worn by the accused, but the blade was unstained. It was subjected to the most minute examination, but no trace of blood could be found on it.

The man was acquitted, and soon afterwards found employment as an attendant at a lunatic asylum, and fulfilled his duties satisfactorily for twelve months, when one day he made his appearance at the police-court to make the surprising confession that, after all, it was he who had murdered Mrs. Adams. He had intended to kill himself as well, but not succeeding, it occurred to him to put the murder on the husband. At the same time, and again on his trial, he declared

that, despite the evidence of the experts, the weapon used was the clasp-knife found in his pocket.

He was convicted of the murder, but was afterwards sent to Broadmoor as a criminal lunatic, and there he died. The boy who assaulted his little cousin with a chair for 'sneaking' on him was the murdered woman's son, but he had not been entirely neglected. The aunt, who deemed it her duty to give evidence against him at Thames Police Court, was the murdered woman's sister, and though at the time of the tragedy she had ten children of her own, and her husband was only a labouring man, she charged herself with the care and maintenance of the hapless orphan.

That poor little urchins of the Arthur Adams breed should discredit the proverb, 'Old heads are never seen on young shoulders,' is not in the least surprising. Though aged but thirteen, he might have been almost thirty instead if facial expression counts for anything. As his aunt was giving her unflattering account of him to the magistrate, as he stood in the dock sullenly regarding her, one could almost imagine that he was not frowning, but that they were 'crow's-feet' contracting the outlook of his restless eyes,

and that years of care and trouble had compressed the corners of his mouth, which opened but once while his aunt was giving her evidence, and that was to tell her not to tell lies, but to stick as close to the truth as she could without hurting herself.

No one but their miserable poor little selves know of the cruel hardships and strange experiences with which hundreds of these babes of the slums grow familiar, and when, now and again, some startling illustration is brought to light it is generally in an accidental way, as was the case when, in the autumn of last year, George Drybone, a ruffianly-looking lout, was charged before a South London magistrate with assaulting a little boy named Troutbeck.

It appeared that both boys got a living in the street, the one by selling newspapers, and the other cigar-lights. It was stated in evidence that a gentleman, leaving the railway-station, had given Troutbeck a newspaper, and as it was a recent issue and quite clean, the little fellow tried to sell it, and had just succeeded when Drybone came hurrying up to serve the same customer, and, finding himself forestalled, he first stamped savagely on the child's feet, and then thrust his

roll of newspapers into his face with such violence that he was knocked down with his mouth bleeding.

In reply to the charge, Drybone scowlingly remarked that he wasn't going to allow anyone to interfere with his getting a living, and that he had acted in the way described 'because he felt wild.' He was sent to prison for seven days, and then the magistrate inquired of little Troutbeck who were his parents, and where they resided. He lived with his grandmother, he said, but where he declined to tell.

In order to induce him to do so he was put back for a short time, and meanwhile a charitable lady made application that the child might be given into her charge. It was, however, not without unmistakable reluctance that Master Troutbeck accepted the offer. Was it because he did not like to leave his grandmother? he was asked. No, it was not that. Did he, then, prefer to wander barefoot and neglected about the streets? Indeed, no. It wasn't that either.

'But please, lady, before you take me away, I've got something to tell you. Pray don't split on me. I shall be sure to catch it if you do. Please, lady, I ain't a boy at all; I'm a girl.'

There is no fear of anything happening to the child now, whoever may 'split.' It is a considerable time since her adventurous life was brought to such an abrupt conclusion. Happy and comfortable in her new home, she related to me the following strange story:

'The first I remember of home is living in Golden Lane with my mother, who made men's braces. I don't think she made a very good living by it, because we hardly ever had any dinners. I don't know anything about father—my real father, I mean. Mother used to speak of him as being a soldier, but I never saw him. My mother was always kind to me then, and right up to the time when she made friends with Pat Wemms when his wife died.

'The Wemmses used to live in the back room above us, and they had a boy named Denny. My mother did not like them because they went out begging, and Mr. Wemms used to get drunk, and then there was such rows overhead we couldn't get any sleep. But when Denny's mother died my mother used to go up and tidy their room and light the fire by the time Pat Wemms and his boy came home in the evening.

'And so we all got quite friendly together,

until one day my mother told me that Denny's father was my father as well, as she had been and got married to him. After that there was a change. We all used to go out begging at first, but mother soon got tired of it, and took to going to the public-house instead. But me and Denny still went out begging by ourselves.

'Pat Wemms said that the reason why we didn't have more money given us was that we went about too respectable-looking, and he made me go without shoes. I had never gone without before, and my feet ached so with the cold and the cuts the stones made in them that I couldn't help crying very often. Pat Wemms used to treat me cruelly as well. Once he hit me with the buckle-end of his waist-strap—he used to take it off on purpose—and hurt my hip so I could hardly stand. But he wouldn't let me stay at home. I should get more give me, he said, if people saw me walking lame, and that he wished that I was lame always. He made me a make-shift crutch out of a broomstick, and with that and leaning on Denny's shoulder I managed to get along.

'Mother told me to say it was rheumatism if anybody asked what it was that made me walk

lame, and that we had no father, and that mother was at home ill in bed. We told that story at all the houses we called at, and by tea-time we had more than three shillings give us. It made me feel frightened. We had never got so much in a day before, and I thought that Pat Wemms might cripple me on purpose, so that I should have to go on crutches always.

'Denny and me went out again next day, but we got into trouble. We were begging at the houses in a square, and at one of them, not knowing it was a doctor's, we were asked in, and the gentleman, he looked at my hip, and sent for a policeman. We were took to the station-house, and Pat Wemms had to come to the court next day. But the police did not know us, and the magistrate let us off on Pat Wemms promising that he wouldn't send us out again. After that Pat sent us out selling wax-lights at Broad Street Railway-station. It was almost the same as begging, but having something to sell prevented the police taking us up.

'For a long time it was wet weather, and I got a cough and bad eyes; but mother was so altered now she didn't seem to care a bit, and she and Pat Wemms were always talking about moving

away to a part where they were not known and commence begging again. Denny, he used to sleep on some sacks on the landing, and I slept on a shelf in a large cupboard there was in the room, and one night, when I was abed, I heard mother and Pat Wemms talking about me and my bad eyes, and Pat told mother about a woman he knew who had a blind boy. She went about begging, and made six or eight shillings a day. And the way the boy came to be blind was that when he had bad eyes the woman made a shade for them of green wall-paper, and the green colour took the eyesight away. And all mother said was:

'"But suppose they had found out about her doing it?"

'"Why, then, don't you see," said Pat Wemms, "she'd have said that if she had been doing wrong it was in her ignorance, as she had always understood that green colour was good for bad eyes. Besides," Pat said, "where is the harm of it? It was doing the boy a good turn. Blind people are always better off than people that can see; people have so much pity for them."

'And mother said if you looked at it in that way she didn't see much harm in it herself.

'I didn't hear anything more they said, but I was dreadfully frightened. I felt sure and certain that Pat Wemms was wicked enough to persuade mother to blind me in the same way as the woman he knew blinded the boy. I couldn't go to sleep. Anything would be better than being blind, and at last I made up my mind to run away. The only thing was: I had hardly anything to run away in. And then it came into my mind that I might take Denny's clothes, and in that way turn myself into a boy, and then I should not be so easily found if they looked for me, and I should have a better chance of getting a living as well.

'Denny was a year older than me, but I was quite as tall as him. He slept outside on the landing, but his clothes and boots were kept inside. I lay awake until it was just break of day, and then I slipped out of the cupboard and put on Denny's clothes and his cap, and carried his boots in my hand for fear of making a noise in them.

'Denny was fast asleep when I stepped over him on the landing, and I went downstairs and ran off. I didn't know where to go, and Denny's heavy boots hurt my feet. I wandered about till I got dreadfully tired and hungry. I was feeling

in Denny's pockets for any crumbs that might be there, when a pin pricked my fingers, and when I turned the pocket inside out there was a three-penny-piece that Denny had kept back from his takings the day before. I spent it all at once. It was at a little shop in Clare Market, where they sold soup and pudding.

'But it was getting late in the evening, and I had nowhere to sleep. In one part of Clare Market there were some very old houses being pulled down, and one with the bottom part of the street-door so broken away that the hole was large enough for me to creep through. It was getting towards dark when I first saw it, and I thought I should be afraid to go in there; but when it got darker I felt so tired that I found my way back again and crept in. There was a lamp outside, and it showed some light into the passage, which was lucky, for the boards were some of them broken and others had been taken away, and if it had been quite dark I should most likely have fallen through. But there was the parlour with the door open, and I felt my way in, and there was a cupboard in the corner, and as I had been used to sleep in the cupboard at home, I didn't so much mind going in there. There was

not room in this one to lie down, only to sit, but it was better than being out in the cold, dark street, and I soon fell asleep.

'It was late in the morning when I woke up, and went into the street, and I was soon hungry again, and went begging. I got fourpence altogether, and was going to buy something to eat, when an old woman stopped me. She was a beggar, too, and she had seen me call at some of the houses she called at. She began swearing at me for it, but I told her I had run away from home, and was obliged to beg to get something to eat. She then began to talk to me, and asked me if I would like to go begging along with her. She lived all alone, she said, and if I would like to beg along with her she would give me a lodging and my food, and something to spend every day as well. I asked her where she lived, and she said at Westminster, and as I knew that was a long way from my home, I agreed to go with her.

'I was very glad to have somewhere to sleep. Of course, she thought no other than that I was a boy, and it was all the better for me that she was nearly blind. She told me that she quite lost her sight sometimes, and that was why she wanted

someone to lead her about and fetch her errands. When we got home at night she made me a bed in the corner of her room, but before that she sent me out to fetch her a pint of rum, and seeing me coming out of the public-house, a boy said to me:

'"I saw you coming home with old Mother Troutbeck. Is she going to have you for her boy?"

'I told him yes, and he laughed, and said he wouldn't like to be me; and when I asked him why, he answered:

'"Because she makes you sleep in the same room with her, and she has the devil come to see her every night. That is why she has a boy sleeping in the same room. She is afraid to sleep by herself."

'I thought he only said so to frighten me, but I soon found different.

'I hadn't been asleep very long when she came and woke me. She was not like the same old woman. She had nearly white hair, and it was loose over her face and eyes, and she was staring wildly and shaking and trembling.

'"He has gone now," she whispered when she had shaken me and woke me up—"Satan has, I mean. But he is sure to come back again in a

minute or two. I am going to hide under my bedstead, and when he comes you must tell him that I have gone out and am not coming back."

'I should have been more frightened than I was, but her breath smelt dreadfully, and all the pint of rum I had fetched was gone. I had seen Pat Wemms when he had been drinking a great deal come home raving, and crying out that all manner of dreadful things were chasing him and trying to catch him, and mother was not much frightened after a time or two.

'"All right," I said. "When he comes I will tell him what you say."

'And she crawled under the bedstead, while I sat in her arm-chair with a blanket round me. Two or three times she came out and listened at the door and chimney, and then crawled under the bedstead again, and at last she fell asleep there.

'She did not do the same every night, and excepting for that, I did not have much to complain of. We used to go out begging every day, and she fed me well, and always gave me something to spend when we came home at night. I was always afraid that one day we should meet mother or Denny, but we never did, so I suppose

they either moved far away or they didn't go begging any more.

'I got on all right with Granny Troutbeck for three or four months, and then she began to grow worse, to drink more rum, and be afraid of imps and things, and when she was in that state she bit and scratched when I tried to hold her and prevent her hurting herself. At last she got so bad she couldn't get out of bed sometimes for a week together, and as she wouldn't let me go out by myself, we often had to go hungry. So I bought some cigar-lights, the same as we used to buy when I used to go to Broad Street with Denny, and I used to go home and sleep at granny's. And it was while I was selling my lights at Victoria Station that the newspaper-boy trod on my feet and knocked me down. What happened after that you know all about, sir.'

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CHAPTER IV

KISSING THE BOOK

General disregard for the penalties of perjury—The false swearing of Peter Leary—A 'nice old crab'—The careless way in which oaths are commonly administered—The policeman in the witness-box—Corroborating a comrade—Popular prejudice against police evidence—The East-End alien as a sworn witness—Miss Florrie Kaloski and her curious courtship—Her sworn testimony against innocent Michael Singland—His imminent peril—The perjury exposed—The lying inventions of Leah Bobleosky—Disappointed love—The four male victims of her spite and malice.

DESPITE Scriptural warrant for the sweeping impeachment that 'all men are liars,' the law of the land is that any person who, after making solemn asseveration that he will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, in connection with the matter under investigation, is proved to have wilfully stated what he knew to be untrue, is liable to as lengthy a term of imprisonment as probably he would be sentenced to were he

convicted of burglary, or for taking life in a quarrel.

Yet, judging from the 'mere matter-of-form' air with which the majority of persons called on to take part in police-court business take in hand the Book on which they are sworn, it would seem that at the moment they are thinking little or nothing of the grave responsibility they are incurring. Not that it may invariably be relied on that the individual who ostentatiously parades his sense of the solemn nature of the ceremony he is engaged in is the most trustworthy.

There are witnesses who stand up to make the sacred pledge with an expression of countenance intended to indicate that the wealth of the whole world would not induce them to swerve one hair's breadth from the truth, pure and simple.

The observant police-court frequenter, however, finds it a by no means uncommon occurrence, should an astute cross-examiner take such witness in hand, that he will generally have something to amend or modify, and it is next to certain that, should two or more witnesses be so tested, their story, although matching in the main, will differ, more or less, as regards minor particulars, which,

they all having been eye-witnesses of the same thing, could scarcely have happened if they had kept steadfastly to the terms of their oath. It is proper that all evidence given in a court of justice should be sworn, just as it is merciful towards the average prisoner in the dock to permit him to make any exculpatory statement he pleases ; but it is nothing less than appalling the lies sometimes told by the accused, and the ease and plausibility with which they set in the shade the most notorious achievements of Ananias.

Take the following case, brought before the magistrate at Marlborough Street in illustration : Charged with attempting to pass a counterfeit florin at the bar of a public-house, Peter Leary, an elderly man, white-haired, and of mildly benevolent aspect, tremulously, but emphatically, pleaded not guilty. The evidence was strong against him. He had ordered a glass of ale and placed the false coin in question on the counter to pay for it. The barman took it up, and as he was turning to get the change from the till had his suspicions awakened by the feel of it, and, examination convincing him that it was spurious, he placed it on the counter before the customer, at the same time remarking :

'What do you call that?'

Prisoner took it up, and in an instant put it down again.

'I call it a two-shilling piece,' he said; 'what's the matter with it?'

The barman at once took the coin in his hand and found that it was of genuine mintage, but, as it happened, this was one that had seen some service, whereas the one he had refused was nearly new. He said nothing, but quietly sent for a policeman and gave the man into custody, and on being searched, the vanished florin was discovered in the sleeve of his coat, and in his waistcoat pocket was another of precisely the same make and pattern.

But in the dock Mr. Leary bore up bravely against this crushing weight of testimony.

'Your Worship,' he earnestly remarked, 'I am innocent. Immediately before entering the public-house I bought a haddock at a stall in the Market Street. Which one among so many it is of course impossible for me to say. I paid threepence for it, and the costermonger gave me change for half a sovereign. The fish found in my basket was the one I bought. I do not deny that the bad money was found on me, but the stall-keeper must have given it me with the rest of my change.'

'But,' observed the magistrate, 'having plenty of pocket-room, why did you put part of your change up your sleeve?'

'That, your Honour,' replied Mr. Leary, 'as a truthful and honest man, I can account for. It is a perilous thing for a poor man, like myself, to be suspected of wilfully passing bad money, so when the barman returned to me the florin as a bad one, happening to have another in my hand, I slipped it down my sleeve instead. That, as the Almighty is my Judge, is the truth.'

And then Mr. Leary clasped his hands, and piously raising his eyes to the ceiling, continued:

'Your Worship, I have an old wife at home who I love better than my own life. May she be dead and ready for her coffin when next I set eyes on her if I have uttered to you a word of falsehood.'

It was very affecting. Gentle murmurs of sympathy were heard at the back of the court, where the public had standing room, and even the barman witness seemed sorry that he was mixed up in such painful proceedings. But if the magistrate was moved by emotion he was successful in concealing it.

Anything known of the prisoner?'

And up steps an officer, at whom Mr. Leary scowls as at a deadly enemy.

'There are several convictions against him, your Worship, the last one dating back to last October, when he was sentenced to six months for a similar offence.'

And while the officer was speaking the mask vanished from Mr. Leary's countenance as instantaneously as the bad florin had disappeared from the public-house counter, and he was, to all appearance, no better than a callous old rascal.

'Nice old crab you are!' he growled at the officer, when the magistrate sentenced him to six months' hard labour. 'You ought to have a medal for your blooming cleverness.'

Unfortunately, it cannot be confidently asserted that the official (the usher) whose duty it is to administer the oath to witnesses previous to their giving evidence invariably does so in such a way as to impress the person who takes in hand the sacred Book with the full solemnity of the obligation to which he is about to pledge himself. Of course, it would be quite wrong to say that familiarity with the religious formula in any case breeds contempt for it, but it certainly seems to have a tendency to blunt the administerer's sense

of reverence for the ceremony. And this, strangely enough, is especially noticeable when the average usher is swearing a police constable. This may be partly due to the court official having the fullest confidence in the spirit of truth that reposes in the men of the force, and which makes their mere word as good as their bond; but the habitual observer is apt to come to the conclusion that it is understood between the parties that, with so much business in hand, brevity is a foremost consideration, and that, since the oath has to be administered, why, the quicker the better.

This is especially a matter for regret where police witnesses are concerned, and for this reason before all others: there prevails among the lower labouring community (the class with which the police most commonly have to deal) that, when a constable takes a man into custody and charges him before a magistrate, his one idea is to obtain a conviction. It did not require four years daily attendance at the courts, nor indeed as many months, to convince me that such is not the rule; all the same, it is no more than reasonable that, having brought his prisoner to the magisterial presence, he should do his honest best to sub-

stantiate the accusation. 'Yes,' say the grumblers, 'and what chance has the chap charged got when the magistrate always takes the policeman's word before his?' And very properly so, unless his Worship has reasons for suspecting the officer of untruthfulness. In most cases the constable is on oath and the prisoner is not, and in denying the evidence against him he is at least as likely to tell a lie with a view to escape imprisonment as the policeman is to get him convicted.

It is not so much, however, in cases where only one constable is concerned that a prejudiced prisoner is apt to think that the 'swearing' is unjustly hard against him as when two, or perhaps three or four, are concerned in the charge. It may be said that, there being but one story to tell, there is nothing remarkable that, as told by the police witnesses one after the other, it should match in all the essential particulars. But 'essential' is one thing, and 'minute' another, and when three constables enter the witness-box in succession, and repeat the evidence almost word for word, and as though they were reading from a book, it is not surprising that if in such cases the solicitor engaged for the defence should direct the magistrates' attention to the curious coin-

cidence, and inquire of the policeman-witness if he has not talked the whole matter over with his comrades before the case came on for hearing. The answer is invariably in the negative, but there can be but little doubt that in most instances it is more or less true. And if any of the most pertinent points have been too lightly regarded by the witnesses in waiting, they listen to what is said by their comrade first in the box, and are prepared when their turn comes.

As much for the credit of the men themselves as for the cause of justice, this encouragement to collusion should be put a stop to. It is the practice at nearly all the courts for any number of police witnesses engaged in a case to remain in court awaiting their turn to be called. Should the accused or his advocate object the magistrate will order all of them, except the one in the witness-box, to retire until their services are required, but otherwise they remain and listen to the whole of the proceedings. There is one magistrate who discountenances the practice. This is Mr. Cluer, who generally sits at Worship Street, and his example might well be followed by all magistrates sitting in the Metropolitan courts. There is one section of the community

who are said never to take solemn oath except to injure an enemy—the Polish, Russian, and German 'aliens' at the East End reckon in the category. Take the following by way of illustration:

Quite an attractive-looking young woman, Florrie Kaloski, aged eighteen, and a native of Poland, appeared before Mr. Mead, sitting at Thames Court, to prefer a charge of great gravity against Michael Singland, aged twenty, a Russian subject, and in employment as a waiter.

Having been but a few months in this country, Miss Kaloski had to avail herself of the assistance of the court interpreter, and through that medium she gave her evidence with a seeming artlessness and simplicity that made a favourable impression on all who listened to her interesting and romantic narrative.

'My father,' said Miss Kaloski, 'was in business for himself in a manufacturing district in Poland, and he gave me employment. He likewise employed a young woman who was anxious to come to England, where, as she had been informed, much more money might be earned than in our own country. She persuaded me to accompany her, and I did so, though it was against my father's wish. It was arranged that we should

keep together, but shortly after we arrived in London I lost sight of her, and did not see her afterwards. I found employment at my own trade, but after a short time I left it, and went into domestic service at the West End. I remained there only three weeks, and then left, and went to lodge in Boyd Street, Commercial Road. One day I noticed the name of "Hann" over a watchmaker's shop in the Mile End Road, and I remembered that the young woman I came over with had mentioned the name, so I called and found that, several years previous, she had been a neighbour of ours in Poland, so we arranged that I should live with her until I obtained another situation.

'At first I thought she was a good, honest woman, but I soon found different. After a little time she began to hint that there were more pleasant ways of living than going to service. She told me that she knew of a very nice young man who had plenty of money, and who, if I pleased him, would marry me and keep me like a lady. I told her that I had no idea of getting married at present, and that I did not wish to see the young man, but next day he came.

'He told me that he had seen me before, in

my own country, and then I remembered that I had seen him, but had never spoken to him. He came two or three times to the house, and Mrs. Hann gave him encouragement, and was angry with me because I was not more friendly with him. She said that Michael Singland had fallen in love with me, and had begged of her to take him in as a lodger that he might be always near me.'

And then artless Miss Kaloski went on to describe the fiendish machinations of which Mrs. Hann was guilty, and to which Michael Singland, being her confederate, she fell a victim. Next day she escaped from the room in which she had been locked, and made her way to the abode of a Mrs. Simons with whom she was acquainted, and informed her of what had happened, and was advised to go and state her case to the lady superintendent of the Jewish Society for the Protection of Women and Children.

Prisoner's defence was an absolute denial of the accusation, which he attributed to his having incurred Miss Kaloski's vindictiveness by declining to have anything to do with her. She had, he said, sworn that although she had known him in Poland it was only by sight, whereas the fact was

that for several months he had worked with her in her father's factory, and at that time she took a liking for him he did not encourage. It was mainly to get away from her that he came to England, though he told her a situation had been offered him. She told him she did not believe him, and threatened to follow him, but he had no idea that she intended to keep her word. He could not say that it was because she found out that he was lodging at the watchmaker's in the Mile End Road that she called there; but he would produce witnesses to prove that as soon as she arrived in London she commenced making inquiries after him. He was astonished to find that she had taken a lodging in the same house, and had never mentioned her name to Mrs. Hann nor she to him.

Mrs. Hann was called, and corroborated prisoner's statement. It was because she had known prosecutrix in Poland that she took her in as a lodger. She had never introduced Singland to her, and could swear that the two were never in a room together by themselves. Prosecutrix had sworn that while she and Singland were there Mrs. Hann opened a little window in the wall and looked in, whereas she could prove beyond

the possibility of dispute that the window was nailed up, and had not been opened for years.

The Mrs. Simons to whom prosecutrix went in the first instance was called for the prosecution, but her evidence did not discredit prisoner's explanation. Mrs. Simons had known both prosecutrix and the accused in Poland. They worked together in the same factory, and she (witness) was under the impression that they were keeping company. When Miss Kaloski came to her it was evening, and she looked as though she had been crying, but she made no mention of anything having happened to her till next day.

Mr. Mead called prosecutrix forward and questioned her as to her previous knowledge of Singland, and her answers were so unsatisfactory that the magistrate told her that he could come to no other conclusion but that her entire statement was a fabrication, and that prisoner was entitled to be discharged.

Only a few weeks after Miss Kaloski so ignominiously distinguished herself at Thames Court another Polish maiden found her way thither to justify a charge against four of her own countrymen that was almost as romantic and, as the upshot indicated, quite as unworthy of credence

as that made by the accuser of Michael Singland.

The names of the four young fellows placed in the dock were Morris Goldstone, Jacob Silverstein, Mark Weisbaum, and Isaac Schaffer, the prosecutrix being Leah Boblesky, who gave her age as twenty-seven and claimed to be a nurse.

Through the medium of the court interpreter, Mrs. Boblesky narrated to his Worship how that she took the advice of her brother-in-law, and came to England in hopes of bettering her position. Arrived here she was quite a stranger in the land. Having but little money, and being a young woman of frugal and industrious habits, within a very short time she found employment, and about the same time she fell in with Morris Goldstone and got into conversation with him.

The social habits and customs prevailing among Polish working people would appear to be somewhat different from those of our own labouring class. Mrs. Boblesky was naturally pleased to meet with a civil and affable fellow-countryman, and after some friendly chat—it was in the street that they met—Morris Goldstone inquired if she was a single woman, and she honestly replied that she was not. She informed the young man that

she had been married in her native village, but was divorced from her husband. That, however, did not spoil Mr. Goldstone's suddenly-conceived, disinterested, and obliging intention.

'Since you are unmarried,' he smilingly remarked, 'you want a husband?'

It was a somewhat sudden way of putting a proposition of such delicacy, but Leah was equal to it, and replied:

'Why do you ask?'

She probably expected that the insinuating Morris meant then and there to boldly offer himself, but if that was her idea she was mistaken.

'Because,' said Morris, 'if you do want a husband, I happen to be acquainted with a chap named Silverstein, otherwise Yankel, who is a bachelor and in every way eligible, and you have only to say the word, and I will introduce you to him.'

It may be presumed that the lady said the word, for a very short time afterwards she met Goldstone again, and he had a young fellow with him.

'Here he is,' said Morris. 'Look at him! This is Yankel.'

Whether she directed her gaze as invited and was instantly smitten witness did not say. At all events, Yankel, alias Silverstein, made a favourable impression on her, and she met him again without his friend Goldstone, and from that date they walked out together. Nothing was said by Mr. Goldstone about 'commission on the job' when he introduced his friend, but, according to witness's statement, a few days afterwards he waited on her, and remarked that he would be glad to borrow ten shillings, and without demur she gave it him.

'Only as a loan,' said the witness; 'it was to Yankel that I gave ten shillings as a present.'

'What on earth for?' inquired Mr. Mead.

'Because,' replied the blushing Leah—'because he spoke so nice and kind and said he would marry me.'

Nor was that, according to the evidence, the only occasion on which he spoke nice and kind with a purpose.

'He told me,' said prosecutrix, 'that it hurt his feelings because he was not respectable enough to walk out with me, and he asked me to buy him a new coat, and I did so.'

With Yankel in his new coat the two walked out frequently and were happy, when, sudden as a thunder-clap, it came to Leah's knowledge that the perfidious Yankel was already married.

An English young woman would probably have submitted tearfully to the situation. Not so Polish Leah. She knew where her false lover lived, and she had likewise made acquaintance with two or three of Mr. Yankel's friends, Mark Weisbaum among the rest. Some days after Mr. Yankel's treachery had been known to her she met Mark in the street, and told him all about it.

Mr. Weisbaum appeared to be greatly concerned and indignant, and, according to witness, intimated his opinion that it was a got-up affair between Goldstone and Silverstein, and asked her what she intended to do in the matter. She replied that she knew where Goldstone lodged, and that she thought of going to him and demanding back the ten shillings she had lent him.

'Good idea,' remarked Mr. Weisbaum. 'I will come with you if you will go now, and will see that you get it.'

So, according to the sworn testimony of the

prosecutrix, they went together, and, knocking at the door, were informed that Morris Goldstone was upstairs. They went up to the room, and found there, not only Goldstone, but Silverstein as well, and another Polish gentleman named Ike Schaffer.

This was about seven o'clock, and nothing unpleasant seems to have been said or done for half an hour, when the burning subject was broached by Mrs. Boblesky, who demanded her ten shillings of Goldstone. Then a row ensued, and, if witness spoke truth, she was very shamefully used. She found that she had not a friend in the room, not even Weisbaum, who, she said, assaulted her, and, while one person held her, somebody else picked her pocket of seven shillings. All four men assaulted her, and in struggling with them her frock was torn from her back, and in that condition she was hustled downstairs and into the street.

In their defence the four young men, who all bore good characters, denied all knowledge of what was alleged against them, and it was suggested that prosecutrix was actuated solely by spite on account of Silverstein, alias Yankel, having deceived her.

According to Weisbaum's account, it was to act the part of peacemaker that he accompanied her to Goldstone's lodgings, and as soon as she saw Silverstein there she began to upbraid him, and, catching up a glass sugar-basin, threw it at his head. She was proceeding to other acts of violence, and they caught hold of her to put her out of the room, and in her fighting and struggling her gown was torn. No one picked her pocket, or attempted to do so, and it was not until she had flatly refused to go away quietly that an attempt was made to put her out of the room. Several respectable witnesses residing in the same house and had seen what occurred corroborated defendants' version of the affair.

Recalled by Mr. Mead, prosecutrix said that when she was hustled into the street with her gown torn from her back three or four people who lived in the house saw it, and called Shame!'

'Then why not call them as witnesses?' Mr. Mead suggested.

'I don't want to call any witnesses,' returned Mrs. Boblesky sulkily. 'If you don't like to believe what I have told you, I can't help it.'

Mr. Mead remarked that there was nothing

before him in support of the charge but the uncorroborated statements made by the prosecutrix, and as to his mind they were not convincing, the four young men accused must be discharged.

CHAPTER V

CHILDREN 'BEYOND CONTROL'

Ten years old, and his father afraid of him—'He is the terror of the house, yer Washup. He defies me and his mother, he won't go to school, and he eats up all the wittles, and his brothers and sisters go hungry'—Firm believers in the curative virtues of the Industrial School—The lengths to which unscrupulous parents go to effect their object—Mother in the witness-box; her child in the dock—'He was always a liar and a dunce, and now he is a thief as well'—The black sheep of the flock—'Salting' his father's paint-pots—'Dare to lay a hand on me and I'll put you in quod again!'—Trials and troubles of a School Board visitor—The Bulpit family—Mr. Visitor's skirmish with Mrs. Bulpit.

BEFORE a person can be permitted to transfer his parental responsibilities to the School Board authorities, it would appear to be essential that he should be able to show that the child he wishes to be rid of is beyond his control.

What constitutes 'control' seems to be a debatable point. Does it mean moral, or physical,

or both? In a case recently before a magistrate it was contended by a father that, if he felt disinclined, it was not for the law to insist that he should chastise his child, or in any way inflict bodily pain on him if he refused to do as he was told. If the authorities thought fit to take the little lad in hand, they were, of course, at liberty to keep him in order by means of their corrective methods, and it was not for him (the father) to object.

The case was the more interesting from the fact that the father, a broad-backed carman, had previously 'lost control' of a brother of the urchin then brought before the court, and had succeeded in getting him placed in an industrial school.

'But this little fellow of eleven years old,' remarked Mr. Horace Smith. 'You cannot expect me to believe that a big fellow like you cannot enforce obedience from a mere child by a judicious use of the birch-rod.'

'It is quite against my principles, your Worship,' replied the father, 'to beat a child of mine. I could not resort to any measures that were brutal. If reasoning and persuasion have no effect on him, I have done.'

'All the same, you have no objection to his

being chastised when he deserves it, and as other boys are, if you can get him off your hands?'

'I wouldn't so far forget myself, your Worship, as to attempt to interfere then,' returned the gentle carman. 'The law has its ways, and I have mine.'

But it presently appeared that the ways of this merciful man were peculiar. Up spoke a police constable:

'He was fined ten shillings or seven days, your Worship, not many weeks ago, for assaulting his wife and blackening both her eyes.'

'That hasn't got anything to do with it. We are talking now of what I think is the right thing to do as a father.'

'It is for me to do what I think is right as a magistrate,' remarked his Worship severely, 'and that is, to tell you to take your little boy home and manage him for his good. And bear this in mind: If it should be found necessary to send him to an industrial school, it will not be at the expense of the ratepayers. It may be worth your while seriously to consider whether you cannot contrive to control him when you are given to understand that if he is taken from you before he

is sixteen you will have to pay five shillings a week the whole time.'

Unfortunately, however, it seems to have become tolerably well known among those persons who are anxious to get rid of their growing boys and girls that, though some such order may be made, it is very seldom enforced, and that by a little manœuvring the five shillings may be reduced to two, or even one shilling, while not a few unscrupulous parents are clever enough to avoid payment altogether.

A favourite card played by those parents who regard reformatory discipline as the only cure for their incorrigible child is the offender's inveterate hatred for school. Regardless alike of his father's threats and his mother's imploring, it is his invariable practice to break his promise, and, instead of hastening to school, to slink off in quite another direction, and pass the time in companionship with evil-disposed lads older than himself, who are rapidly initiating him into ways that must ultimately lead him to ruin. Possibly some Board-school official, who has had trouble enough over the case, and would be heartily glad to see the boy's name for good and all from his black list, is present to attest that this is really an

obdurate boy, who will probably go wrong unless he is put under severe restriction. Very few magistrates stand out under such a representation, and the order is made.

There is this to be said, however, and though it, of course, by no means excuses them, there can be no doubt the changed aspect of affairs has weight with parents of many children who are unscrupulous and at the same time very poor.

In the old times, and before sending a child to school was compulsory, boys and girls were sent out to work as soon as they were old enough to earn a shilling or two towards household expenses. Now, however, no matter how large a family a labouring man may have, it is imperative on him to support the juvenile members until they have run the scholastic course, which usually occupies them until they are thirteen or fourteen years old.

This being so, it is money saved and trouble shirked if by hook or by crook, a few years previous to that period, one or two of them can be got rid of. There is only one way of bringing about the happy relief, and that is by so contriving it is made to appear that the superfluous urchin is incorrigibly bad and quite beyond

parental control, and on that ground take him before a magistrate with evidence in support of the allegations against him, and get him sent to a reformatory.

There is no more pitiful spectacle, or one that jars more harshly on one's sense of the first duties of common humanity, than that of a father or mother standing up in a police court to charge against a child, their son or daughter, an offence that, proved, will almost certainly result in a sentence of imprisonment, or what is equivalent to it.

This is bad enough, should the individual guarded in the dock by the court gaoler be of such an age as to be fully responsible for any act of gross wrong-doing; but it is far worse when the youngster accused is of tender years, to whom a penny birch is a dreadful scourge, to see him perched up in the felon's place, while its parent, the mother, with a hard face and a brow bent in stern determination, kisses the Book of which tender regard for little children is a foremost feature, and then proceeds to justify the pitiless course she has taken.

It has been said that when a woman hardens her heart it becomes as the callous rock on which

the poor ship at sea is driven and wrecked, but this metaphor is mostly applied to the affairs of adults, and with treachery of the affections and love turned to hate. Revulsion of feeling may in such cases admit of extenuation, but it is nothing less than unnatural that, under any conditions, a mother should turn against her offspring that not so very long ago lay a suckling at her breast, and, standing up a sworn witness, declare his guilt.

If anything could increase one's indignation for such a mother it would be the admitted possibility that, though the wretched little fellow might be guilty of what he was accused, it was more or less with her connivance and encouragement. It is a startling suggestion, and one that should not be lightly made ; but, unfortunately, the more recent experience of magistrates tends to justify it. There can be no doubt that during the past twelve months there has been a suspicious increase in the number of incorrigible small boys, who set their parents at defiance, crib halfpence, break locks and window-catches when imprisoned in the bedroom, stay out all night, and cruelly ill-treat their smaller brothers and sisters. That there are children who appear to be born to be

bad is undeniable; but it is at least remarkable that they should have become so much more numerous since the new and easy short-cut to the industrial school was discovered.

A case of the kind indicated—or at all events such was unmistakably the magistrate's impression—was heard at Lambeth Court a short time since. It made a curious scene, and one not easy to forget or to forgive, as far as the woman was concerned: the trembling urchin's white and tear-smirched face looking towards her so full of childish beseeching, and her half-averted head and relentless frown that dare not, however, meet his imploring gaze.

'What is it you have to complain of in your boy, Mrs. Bumpstead?'

'Oh, not one thing, your Worship—everything.'

'But I must have something more definite than that. What is the last terrible thing he was guilty of?'

'Well, I will tell your Worship. For months past he has been a liar and a dunce, and now he has turned thief. Over and over again we have missed trifling sums at home, and feeling almost sure that he must have taken them, we have beaten him and kept him without his meals.'

Magistrate: 'What do you mean when you say that you were "nearly" sure that he had taken the money?'

Mother: 'Well, we felt certain sure that neither of his brothers nor sisters would do such a wicked thing.'

'You have no dishonest child but this one?'

'Not at home, sir. We had one, the next oldest to this one, but we got him sent to an industrial school.'

'And up to that time this boy was honest?'

'As far as we knew, your Worship.'

'And when you and your husband first began to think that an industrial school would be the best place for this one, it was then that you found out that he was a thief and everything else that was bad?'

'Well, you see, sir, we have got parents' feelings, and would rather he was sent away than sink from bad to worse. That is what he is doing, and we have given up all hopes of him. The day before yesterday I sent him with sixpence to fetch an errand, but he kept the money and spent it, and was found at twelve o'clock at night afraid to come home.'

The nine-year-old prisoner, bursting into tears:

'I was afraid to come home, mother, because you said you would half kill me if I came home and said I had lost the money.'

Magistrate: 'Was that so, Mrs. Bumpstead?'

'I told him that because I knew what a little thief he was. I was so careful that I pinned the sixpence in his waistcoat pocket.'

Magistrate, to prisoner: 'When did you take the sixpence out, boy?'

'I didn't take it out, sir. When I got to the shop I took out the pin, and the sixpence wasn't there.'

Mother: 'Why, the little liar told the woman at the shop that he had just dropped it.'

Magistrate: 'He did go to the shop you sent him to, then? Why did he, if he had already stolen your sixpence? I may tell you, Mrs. Bumpstead, that I have grave doubts as to your truthfulness, and I hope that the magistrate who sent your other young son to an industrial school at your request was not imposed on. Take your nine-year son home with you and treat him fairly.'

To what extent long-suffering ratepayers suffer through parents of the Bumpstead breed it would be difficult to ascertain. Home, asylum, industrial

school is all the same to them, and so that they can contrive to plant out the heartiest feeder, maybe, or the four or five that sit down at meal-times, why be over-particular as to the means? It is, they may argue, for the boy's good, and as for imposing on the school authorities and putting them to expense, it is only tit for tat. If it wasn't for the Board this very boy would have had a job found for him when he was ten or eleven years old, and after that he would have 'cut his own grass.' As matters stand, if the Board-school authorities can be got to take him, and not only educate, but feed, clothe, and lodge him as well until he is old enough to push his way in the world—if it can be brought about by bamboozling, so much the better.

Every day in the week such cases are before the magistrates.

Scarcely an hour had passed after his Worship at Southwark had adjudicated in the Bumpstead case when up stood a brewer's carman, accompanied by his little son, aged eleven next birthday, to make the humiliating confession that the urchin in knickerbockers was 'too much' for him.

'I'm a widderer, your Worship, and got three

of 'em to keep, and this is the oldest. He won't go to school, however much I whop him. I am out all day, and always leave out grub enough for 'em all, but he breaks open the cupboard and eats up all the wittles, and the others have to go without. Likewise, only yesterday, he took threepence off the mantelshelf, and though he denied it, I found it in his boot. He is contamernatin' the other two, your Worship, and I think that the sooner he is separated from 'em the better.'

But not being favourably impressed, the magistrate refused the application, at the same time remarking :

'Many of you people, I am afraid, have taken it into your heads that you have only got to make out a strong case against a girl or boy and the authorities are bound to relieve you of the burden of that child's support. It is a magistrate's duty to convince them that they are mistaken.'

All the same, there would be considerable danger in assuming that it is unnatural, and therefore next to impossible, that a child of tender age—of ten years old say—can be guilty of acts of downright spite and malice, the objects of his persecutions being his own parents.

That there are such precocious and vindictive little lads to be found, even in these days of Board-school advancement, was undeniably shown in a case brought before the magistrate at Clerkenwell Court.

The age of Master George Sewell was given as nine last birthday, and as he stood by his complaining father's side his head was about on a level with the second button on the paternal waistcoat. He was a fair-complexioned little fellow, with pretty blue eyes and chubby cheeks, and an absolutely guileless expression of countenance, though in reality a callous little wretch, and capable of any amount of impish mischief.

It was not the unfortunate father's first appearance at that court. Sewell senior dolefully reminded the magistrate that it was barely six weeks previous that he had sent him to prison with hard labour for fourteen days for chastizing his young son with unnecessary severity with his waist-strap.

'I own, your Worship,' said the father, addressing the magistrate, 'that I lost my temper and hit him too hard, but the provocation was great. I am a house-painter by trade, and being only in a small way of business, I mix my own paints. At

the time when I thrashed him I had been out of work, and was glad enough when a job to paint a house-front was offered me. I began the work one day, and was surprised when I went to it again next morning to find that the paint was as wet as when I put it on. When I went home to dinner I told my wife about it, the boy George being present. He heard what I said, and laughed. I asked him what he was laughing about, and he said that he knew the paint wouldn't dry because he had put salt in it. He did it, he told me, because I sent him to bed the night before sooner than he wanted to go.'

The paint not drying cost the man a day's work, and put him to an expense of about three shillings. He was so exasperated at the boy's impudent confession that he beat him more severely than he should have done, and the boy went to the police-station and showed his bruises, and he (the father) was given into custody, and sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment.

'And ever since I have been released, your Worship,' continued the father, 'he jeers me about having been in "quod," and asks me how I liked it, and threatens that he will "put me away" again if I dare lay a finger on him. Never a day

passes but he does some act of malicious mischief, the last being the cutting a hole in his mother's dress pocket just before she put her purse in it before going to market, the result being that the purse fell through when she got into the street and was lost, with five and sixpence, all she had to buy Sunday's dinner. It must be stopped somehow, your Worship, so I gave him into custody for the wilful damage to his mother's dress.'

The constable who took the charge said that the boy declared that his father had done it himself out of spitefulness, because he (the boy) got him sent to prison.

Master Sewell, bursting into tears: 'So he did, and mother knows it. She held the pocket open, and he cut it with his pocket-knife. I saw him do it.'

The mother was called, and stated that it was untrue. Her husband was not at home when her pocket was cut. His sister, who was two years older than George, saw him do it with a pair of scissors, and he threatened to stick the scissors into her if she said anything about it.

The sister was called and corroborated her mother's statement. She was afraid to say any-

thing, because she knew that he would stick the scissors into her if he said he would.

The magistrate remarked that it seemed incredible that a child so young should be so artful and malicious. Perhaps a smart birching might do him good. It would be worth trying, at any rate, and after he had received eight strokes his father might take him home with him.

It generally happens, when a juvenile offender has been remanded for inquiries, that on his next appearance the Board-school visitor is present to relate to his Worship all that he knows respecting the urchin's defaults and truancies. Indeed, so familiar a figure in court is that of Mr. Visitor in connection with the prosecution of alleged bad boys, and so stern is his precision in giving incriminating dates and figures, that one might be excused for inclining to the belief that he took delight in getting them punished. Of course, it is not so, though, considering what the poor man has to put up with, it would be no wonder if, starting on the job with the sweetest of tempers, it soon got soured.

I was once persuaded by a long-suffering Board-school official to accompany him on a morning's round, and learn something as to the trials and

vexations to which this class of public servants are liable.

He had made a score or so of thankless 'calls,' when, turning a corner, we came on a loutish lad leaning against a street lamp-post. It was instantly apparent to me that Mr. Visitor knew him, and would have avoided him had he been able to do so, but the engaging youth, lounging with his legs crossed and with both hands deep in his trousers' pockets, plucked him by the coat-tail as we were hurrying on.

'Beg your pardon, mister, but were it your intention to give my old woman a call?'

'Why do you ask?' said Mr. Visitor sternly.

'Oh, because you said last time you was goin' to call, and you didn't, so I thought I would lay wait for you just to touch up your memory. I say, my edjercation is being neglected summat orful, you know.'

'Oh, it is you, Barklow! What do you mean by this, sir? You have no business to be idling about the streets.'

'Don't I know it?' retorted Master Barklow. 'I ought to be at school—that's where I oughter be. It isn't because a boy is big for his age that he is to be done out of his edjercation the law

allows him. Why don't you look up my mother and summons her? Come now, mister, why don't you do it? You summons her up before the Board, and I'll come as a witness against her. Come now!'

'This boy, sir,' said Mr. Visitor, addressing me, 'is one of the most tiresome I have to deal with in the whole district. He is a most ungrateful fellow, and, I am afraid, a wicked and undutiful son.'

''Ow about the undutiful parent? Why don't you summons her? You oughtn't to have any favourites, don't you know.'

'Here, sir, is an idle, bad fellow and a complete dunce——'

'I'm open to be edjerkated! Why don't you have me edjerkated?'

'I will tell you the facts of the case, sir. This boy has no father, and his poor mother has four little children to support. She keeps a small greengrocery in this neighbourhood, and sells coals. You see this lad? He is as big and as strong as many boys three years older than he is, yet because he is a few months less than fourteen he will do no work, and allows his old mother to carry out coals, while he is idling in the street or

at home abusing her for not sending him to school.'

'I know wot's good for me,' remarked Master Barklow, with a grin—'that's where it is.'

'For his mother's sake I have at present not reported the case, but I shall have to do it, and then he will have to put up with the consequences.'

But Master Barklow was not in the least intimidated by the threat.

'All right!' he exclaimed, buttoning his jacket. 'Come on, then! I'll stand to it! I don't care what I suffer so long as I'm edjerkated. Take me before the Board. Summons my old woman, and let all three of us go there this minute.'

The discomforted visitor made a pretence to jot down a severe note or two in his book, and we came away, Master Barklow bawling jeering remarks after us.

'It is a consolation, at all events,' I remarked to my companion, 'that you have no worse case than that on your list.'

'So I just now said,' he replied; 'but I am afraid it was hardly a correct statement. There is a woman who lives on the fifth floor here who is an unceasing source of annoyance to me. I was

once compelled to summons her, and she was fined five shillings, and she has never forgiven me. She is not so abusive as some of them, but adopts the politely sarcastic vein, as I have no doubt you will presently hear.'

We made our way up the five flights of stairs, and tapped at a door that was opened.

'Good-morning, Mrs. Bulpit. I have called to make inquiries respecting Amelia, Jane, and Thomas, who——'

'Oh, pray, sir, do not waste any more of your waluable breath, which is already suffering from five flights, on sich poor hobjiks as my children. The observation you was about to make is, why don't Amelia, Jane, and Thomas attend school? You will excuse my hignerance, sir, but I should have thought that you knowed the reason.'

'It is the old excuse, I suppose—they have no boots?'

'Exactly so, sir. You see, sir—leastways, you may have heerd that boots cost money, and when one is robbed—oh, I beg your pardon, sir—when one is legally done out of five shillings it may go to a mother's heart, but the consequence is her children have to go barefoot.'

'But, as I have told you many times before, if

your husband is really unable to buy boots for the children, I can give you a note——'

'Oh, thank you, sir. You will excuse me not going down on my knees, having a touch of rheumatism, but we have not yet come quite so low as pauper boots. Very nearly, sir, thanks to you, but not while we have got a bed or any little article of that description to dispose of.'

'Well, well, it is no use talking. It is my duty to inform you that the children must be sent to school. You are aware what will again happen if you are obstinate.'

'Oh, pray don't trouble yourself, sir, to remind me of what will happen. They shall come. But might I harsk, sir, is measles looked on in the light of an objection?'

'What do you mean? Who has measles?'

'I beg your pardon, sir, but if you would kindly not jump down my throat it would be a conwenience. It is the baby, sir, who, thank goodness, is too young to be dragged to school with boots or without 'em.'

'But what makes you think it is measles?'

'I must once more beg your pardon, sir. If you was a female and a mother I could give you my reasons, but, being one of the other sex, I

must decline. I may be wrong, but, not having five shillings to call in a doctor, I am obliged to trust to my own judgment, and we must wait a week or two, and if it is measles Nature will work 'em out in the regler way—that is, if the gentlemen of the Board don't make any objections.'

'I will call again this day week, and unless you are then provided with a doctor's certificate showing that there really is measles in the family, I must take further proceedings.'

When we had made our way to the bottom of the five flights, we met a little girl toiling up with a fat and unmistakably healthy baby in her arms.

'Your name is Bulpit, I think?'

'Yes, sir.'

'What is the matter with your infant sister?'

'Nothing at all, sir, that I have heard mother make mention of.'

Mr. Visitor was about to question the little girl further, when his quick ear detected the sounds of Mrs. Bulpit descending the stairs, and we hurriedly took our departure.

CHAPTER VI

ABLE-BODIED PAUPERS

An incurable social evil—The 'Lazy League'—Injustice of the parochial 'labour test'—The science of oakum-picking—The experienced 'hemp-scragger' and his 'fiddle'—A connoisseur in oakum—A 'Unionist' pauper's idea of the proper pay for stone-breaking—The Pampered Paupers of Camberwell—Imported mutton objected to—Unpeeled potatoes flatly refused—A pattern pauper at Poplar—'I'm not a lazy man, your Worship, but I've got my health to consider'—Punching a workhouse master's head—The miller and his men at St. Pancras Workhouse—A fastidious miller—John Copman and his wooden leg—A novel receptacle for smuggled tobacco.

THE idle vagabond who, unless forced thereto by inexorable prison discipline, will do no manner of work, may be reckoned among the seemingly incurable social evils with which modern progress and civilization is afflicted. Their number is increasing. It is as though within the past two or three years some incorrigible old workhouse task-shirker had conceived the idea of forming a 'Lazy

League,' and had sworn in an able-bodied half-dozen or so, who, the moment it was propounded, took kindly to the idea, and solemnly pledged themselves to endeavour to make converts in every casual ward in the kingdom that in the course of their travels afforded them food and shelter. It may safely be assumed that no one day during which the London police-courts are sitting passes but at one or the other there is a parish labour-master in the witness-box, and a dogged, lazy lout in the dock who had flatly refused to perform the task of stone-breaking or oakum-picking given him to do.

Affairs have arrived at such a pass that it is a matter for serious consideration as to whether the parochial authorities themselves are not, to a considerable extent, responsible for this development of incurable laziness among able-bodied indoor paupers. The labour tests are, perhaps, scarcely of a sort to inspire the fraternity with respect for Doctor Watts's warning words, 'Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.'

Oakum-picking, and the reducing of large lumps of granite to the dimensions of two-inch cubes, may or may not be severe toil. To the unaccustomed operator, the really unfortunate

fellow—a soft-handed clerk or shop-assistant—the shredding of old ship's cable, so hard that, in the first instance, it has to be cut into convenient pieces with a hatchet, is not only hard work, but downright torture. It does not distress the muscles, but it excoriates the fingers and breaks the finger-nails. But the wily old workhouse sojourner makes a mere nothing of the job. Hemp-scragging, as he terms it, is to him an amusement in which a 'fiddle' plays a part. But it is not a musical instrument played on with a bow; it is simply a neat little iron hook, that at off times may be carried in his waistcoat pocket. Squatting down to his task, he secures it with oakum strands to his thigh, and by means of it 'claws' the rigid rope to shreds quite easily. Given half a dozen pounds of this material to work on, that being the allotted daily quantity, he will finish it, say, in four hours, and may then make a pillow of the picking, and enjoy a refreshing sleep between dinner and tea time.

There are sorts of oakum that are easier to deal with than others. As most people are aware, the material out of which the soft, hemp-like substance is made with which shipwrights 'caulk' the seams between a ship's planks is old ship's cable chopped

into lengths convenient for picking. Apparently, the portions are all alike, but practised pickers know better, and in selecting their pieces from a heap they can tell at a glance which to take and which to leave.

A connoisseur of this class was Edward Crossman, who came before the magistrate at Thames Court. Many a hundred-weight of oakum had passed through Mr. Crossman's hands, and he could distinguish the tender from the tough as easily, as readily, as a cook can select a 'soft-roed' herring from those that are hard. He was late in the oakum yard, and shrewd selectors had been there before him, and seeing that there were only hard chunks left, he swore and became abusive.

'They won't suit me,' he remarked to the taskmaster. 'I wouldn't be seen touching 'em. I would sooner go to quod.'

And to oblige him a policeman was called in.

'Why did you not do the work?' asked the magistrate.

'Cos I didn't. It wasn't likely I was going to pick oakum that had been messed about by other people. I ain't a unreasonable man, but I couldn't stand that.'

As regards practice making perfect, it is much the same with stone-breaking. The practised hand will wield the small-headed, long-handled hammer with such dexterity that in less than half a day his half-ton of broken 'metal' is ready for measurement, whereas the poor fellow whose hardest task hitherto has been performed with a pen or a needle succeeds in little more than in knocking chips off the sharp edges and meanwhile raising blisters on his palms it will take weeks to get rid of.

There should be a remedy for such an anomalous state of affairs. As regards the incorrigibly lazy rascal who refuses to do any work at all, he should be debarred his food ration next due until he begins and completes the task set him. Should he still be defiant, then let him lie down and starve, and a merciful riddance should he succeed. But there would be no fear of that.

It seems so incredible that an able-bodied man should prefer being sent to prison, where the rule that a capable man must earn his bread before he eats it is inexorable, to paying by his free labour for a benefit conferred on him, that a few instances may be well quoted in proof of the fact.

John Allen, aged thirty, and possessed of

enviable muscular development, was brought before Mr. Dickinson at the Thames Police Court charged with refusing to do his task of stone-breaking at St. George's Workhouse. When introduced to the stone heap he laughed in the foreman's face, and flatly told him that he would see him hanged first. When in the dock before the magistrate, Mr. Allen lolled against the back rail and appeared to take an amused interest in the proceedings, while the solicitor for the Guardians explained the circumstances of the case.

Allen, he said, was one of those shameless reprobates who openly boasted that he had never in his life done a day's work, unless downright compelled, and declared he had no intention of beginning now. He had been many times summarily convicted for refusing to work, and on the last occasion was sent to prison for six weeks. The day following his discharge he was again given into custody, and for the same offence. That he could work if he chose was shown by the fact that he never attempted to shirk his prison tasks, but as soon as he returned to the workhouse the lazy fit seized on him again, and he set the labour-master at defiance.

Mr. Dickinson (to prisoner): 'What have you to say, Allen, as regards this abominable behaviour?'

Allen (insolently): 'What have I got to say? Why, nothing at all.'

Mr. Dickinson: 'Well, all I can say is, that you are making a great mistake if you think you can go on setting the law at defiance. Should you persist in your present line of conduct, and are brought before me, you shall certainly be sent to prison for twelve months as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond. But even now I am willing to give you one last chance. Will you promise me, if I send you back to the workhouse, that you will do the work set you?'

To which Mr. Allen, folding his arms and grinning, insolently made answer:

'No, I won't.'

'What! won't you?'

'I won't do nothing, that's wot.'

The lazy vagabond was sentenced to three months' hard labour, which seemingly was not less than he expected, for he quitted the dock smiling.

What is the peculiar method adopted in prisons in reference to hard labour that makes men, even of the Allen type, cheerfully submit to it?

Take two other cases heard by the same magistrate.

Two broad-backed fellows named Charles Westbrook and William Cronin, having supped, slept, and breakfasted at the expense of the ratepayers of Shoreditch parish, were charged with refusing to perform the regulation task of stone-breaking.

The labour-master gave evidence that when taken to the stone-yard they both refused to take hammer in hand and commence work. Asked for a reason why, Cronin pointed to some men picking oakum, and remarked, 'That's why.' They were told that the doctor had passed them both as able-bodied, and that unless they set about the work they would be given into custody. They then made a beginning, but after breaking about half a bushel each, threw down their hammers and declared that they had had enough of it, and didn't intend to do any more.

Asked by the magistrate what they had to say for themselves, Westbrook, speaking first, replied:

'I don't say as I ain't well and hearty, but I ain't going to be took advantage of because I'm a countryman.'

'What do you mean by that?' Mr. Dickinson inquired.

'Why, what I say. The labour-master see as we was countrymen, and ses he, "Your job will be stone-breaking," and there sat a lot of Londoners picking oakum. We didn't see the force of that sort of unfairness, so we chucked up the job.'

Cronin, a more powerful man than the other, when asked why he refused to complete the job he had started on, made gruff reply:

'Cos it wasn't good enough.'

'Why did you object to it?'

'Because I wasn't going to get proper pay for it. Why, the bit of grub they give us and the bed and all wasn't wuth more than a tanner, and to break that there lot of stones was a good day's work. If I was working at my own trade a day's work would bring me in a dollar, which is all the difference.'

'What is your trade?'

'Bricklayer's labourer.'

'And why don't you work at it?'

'So I do when it comes in my way. Jobs want a lot of looking for in these 'ere hard times.'

'Well, you can't expect to be paid for breaking stones as a casual pauper at the same rate as if you were working for a bricklayer at your proper trade.'

'Why not? It ought to be worth as much, if it ain't. That's how I reckoned it up. I did as much as paid for what I'd had, and then I cut it.'

'Well,' remarked Mr. Dickinson, 'you will both go to prison for fourteen days.'

The two men exchanged glances expressive of their sense of the cruel injustice done them, and Mr. Cronin, addressing the magistrate, remarked in tones of mild reproach:

'And yet, I s'pose, you'll tell us that this 'ere is a free country!'

Camberwell Workhouse was long in high repute with the Lazy League fraternity who make parochial asylums their home, but the inevitable happened, and the pampered pauper gave the game away. He discovered that the roast mutton served at dinner was of the frozen and imported kind, and not prime English Southdown. He grumbled at his gruel because it was not sweet enough to please his palate, and he and his companions pelted the dining-room attendant with the potatoes served at the midday meal because they were brought to table in their jackets instead of being properly peeled and all the eyes taken out.

His appearance before the South London magistrates at last became so frequent and newspaper comment so severe that Camberwell ratepayers grew clamorous, and even the most indulgent of the Guardians recognised the expediency of applying to their able-bodied male inmates a stricter discipline.

It is to be hoped, however, that, laxity giving place to rigour, they will not copy the harsh rule that prevails at some workhouses—Poplar, for example. It is not long since that an unfortunate inmate there was doomed to the inconvenience, to say nothing of the ignominy, of seven days' imprisonment because, in a hasty moment which his just indignation should have excused, he threw his breakfast loaf, weighing nine ounces, at the head of the wardsman because it was of yesterday's baking, instead of warm and crisp from the oven. Nor is that the only instance of the tyrannical usage of paupers by Poplar Guardians that has recently been brought to light.

As was represented to the magistrate by the vindictive solicitor to the Guardians of Poplar Union, the accused man, James Plowman, had been a nuisance to the authorities during the many years he had been an inmate of the workhouse.

He was possessed of a quick and nasty temper, his language was shocking, and though he had an excellent appetite, he detested work in every shape and form. He habitually sulked over his oakum, and when his task was stone-breaking, unless he chanced to be in a particularly good humour, of the half-ton meted out to him he would crack half a hundredweight, or perhaps none at all. Nor did he have the excuse that he objected to perform such degrading labour out in the open, where everybody could see him doing it.

They manage matters more delicately at Poplar. The man put to stone-breaking does the job by himself in a cell, the door of which is bolted on the outside so as to insure perfect privacy. But James Plowman, according to the solicitor's statement, objected to this arrangement; he didn't choose to be shut in. If they left the cell door open he would do the best he could, but so long as it remained closed he would not crack a single chunk. On being taken before the master he swore in a very objectionable way, and as nothing would persuade him to behave himself, he was given into custody.

When before the magistrate, and asked by Mr. Corser what he had to say for himself, Mr. Plow-

man, with his arms crossed on his manly bosom, was ready with his defence.

'I am not a lazy man, your Worship, and I defy anyone to say with truth I am.'

'Do you say, then, that it is not a fact that you refused to do the work allotted you?'

'No, your Worship, I do not do so. I refused, but on justifiable grounds.'

'On what grounds?'

'I have my health to consider, sir. A man cannot exist unless he has a sufficiency of air to breathe. Shut in a cell, and with the door of that cell closed, the atmosphere is impure. That was why I requested that the door might be left open. I am willing to obey the rules, but I must study my health.'

Answering Mr. Corser, the labour-master said that the cell was fifteen feet long and broad in proportion, and that, as for fresh air, there was a large open grating in the door and a space top and bottom. The day previous he performed part of the task without grumbling.

Mr. Plowman: 'But you forget that the day was much cooler than yesterday. I felt that I could work, and I did.'

The labour-master explained that if the door

had been left open Plowman would have been all over the place. He was put to break stones because he refused to pick oakum.

Prisoner still persisted that he was not particular what he did as long as he had plenty of fresh air. He was not a strong man.

Against this last statement, however, evidence was forthcoming that he had been several times convicted for violent assaults on the workhouse officials, as well as on the police, and Mr. Corser sent him to prison for twenty-one days.

'This is not madness, ma'am,' remarked Mr. Bumble to the undertaker's wife in connection with the rebellious behaviour of poor little Oliver Twist. 'This is meat. You have been over-feeding him. If you had fed him on gruel, ma'am, this would never have happened.'

The dietary scale in vogue at the workhouse in Gray's Inn Road is not a matter of public knowledge, but, judging from the fiery spirit displayed by John Tant when he felt that he had been insulted, fresh meat must have entered liberally into his daily rations. One not infrequently hears of male paupers assaulting gate-porters and labour-masters, but for one of them to 'go for' the workhouse-master himself and viciously punch his

head was so novel an offence that one felt curious to hear what the man's provocation was.

But first the charge against him had to be heard. Prisoner, it was stated, was required to pick four pounds of oakum, and flatly refused to set about the job. He was, he declared, a confirmed invalid, and demanded to see the doctor. His wish was complied with, and Doctor Taylor was sent for. Questioning the accused as to his ailment, the latter replied that some months before he had broken his collar-bone, and that ever since manual labour caused him great pain. The medical officer examined him; but, being unable to discover any symptom of a fractured clavicle, he signed a certificate to the effect that Mr. Tant was fit and able to pick oakum.

The accused then altered his plea. He might possibly, he said, have been labouring under a mistake as regards his collar-bone, but he would defy the doctor to deny that he was near-sighted. He had, he declared, been an out-patient at an ophthalmic hospital, and produced the glasses with which he had been provided. The doctor did not dispute the defective vision, but that, he said, would not prevent a man picking oakum.

'All the same, I won't pick it,' said the obdurate pauper. The workhouse master was present during the interview, and hearing Tant's remark, observed, 'We will see about that,' when Tant rushed at him and struck him a swinging blow with his fist, and with such force that the master's eye was blackened and his cheek bruised.

'What have you to say to this charge, Tant?' Mr. Bros, the magistrate, asked him.

'The same as I have already said. I am near-sighted.'

'So you may be, but surely oakum-picking is not such a delicate operation that being near-sighted prevents you undertaking it!'

'Oh, but it does. Your Worship has no idea how particular they are. Even with the best of eyesight you are not always able to give satis-faction.'

'But what have you to say as regards the assault?'

'Oh, the assault! Well, that's a lot to make such a fuss about. What about their assaults on us? Why, there is at the present time a man lying in the infirmary with broken ribs which they give him, and they won't let him out for fear he should come and complain to a magistrate about it.'

'That has nothing to do with your assault on the master. The doctor certified that you were able to do the work, and you should have done it.'

Mr. Tant, contemptuously: 'The doctor! A nice man he is, not to know if a man's eyesight is all right or if it isn't. He ain't fit to be where he is. He's a fool, that's what I call him. He ain't fit to be a doctor at all.'

And condemned to six weeks' hard labour, Mr. Tant was removed from the dock, defiantly declaring that he had seen better doctors made out of tea-leaves.

At St. Pancras Workhouse the old-fashioned labour test of grinding corn is still adhered to, but with the difference that, instead of a dozen men turning one long crank-handle, each man has a neat little mill all to himself, by means of which his task is to grind ten pecks of corn. This is obviously a fairer way than under the antiquated system. In the one case the indolent rascals merely laid their hands lightly on the crank-handle while the industrious few did all the turning; but by the separate mill method the result records exactly the amount of work each man has done.

But, as was illustrated in the case of a pauper miller named Cohen, who had to answer for his misdeeds to Mr. Bros at Clerkenwell, the separate system is objected to. Ten pecks, fair measure, were meted out to Mr. Cohen in the morning, but come evening it was found that he had ground but six pecks, and when remonstrated with he laughed at the task-master, and told him he would have to make that do. According to the evidence, Cohen was an old defaulter, and wasted his time in gossiping with the other millers, and on that account, and for his insolence, he was given into custody.

Asked if he had anything to say in his defence, Cohen replied that he had, and was glad of the opportunity of saying it. The hand-mill system of corn-grinding at St. Pancras was simply barbarous. It might be all very well when a man was put on a mill that was in decent condition, but there were shocking bad mills as well as good ones, and the former were reserved for those against whom the task-master had a spite.

'That,' continued Mr. Cohen, 'is my unfortunate position. As for a civil word from him—oh, dear no! It is all blaring and swearing in this style;' and the court straightway resounded

with a few choice specimens of the labour-master's verbal ferocity in giving his commands. 'When I told him that I couldn't grind more than I did,' the prisoner went on, 'I told the truth. No man could. It is slavery. This is it;' and he shaped as a grinder, and worked an imaginary mill, defective in its cogs and cranks, and with painful imitations of the creaking and complaining of the faulty machinery. 'It is different as light from dark your Worship, if you've got a good mill. This is the style, then;' and, again applying himself to an imaginary mill-handle, Mr. Cohen set his arms revolving briskly, almost as the sails of a windmill in a gale.

'But,' remarked the magistrate, 'you laughed in the labour-master's face when he told you that you had completed not much more than half your task.'

'Me laugh, your Worship!' and Cohen gravely shook his head. 'Not much of that; it made me feel too ill. I ain't recovered from it yet. I've caught such a dreadful cold, I don't know when I shall be better. What does he do, but put me exposed to the draught of an open door, and there I was, turning and turning, and sweating and sweating, till I was that exhausted I could hardly

stand. I told him I'd expose him, and I'm glad of the chance of doing it.'

Mr. Bros : 'Well, what do you say as to returning to your work now? Do you think you feel equal to it?'

'I don't, your Worship. I hain't got the wind for it.'

Mr. Bros : 'Your health and strength will probably improve during a short stay in prison. You will be remanded for a week.'

The spectacle of an enraged one-legged pauper, grasping in his hands the wooden substitute for his lopped limb, and hopping frantically about a workhouse ward in pursuit of the wardsman of the establishment, all the time threatening to knock out his brains as soon as he gets at him, must have afforded a scene of excitement, and one in which the said official would gladly cease to figure, especially when he was aware that the male pauper onlookers, who might have rendered him assistance, refrained from doing so on account of their sympathy with the wooden-legged one. Two to one in a matter of legs, as in every other calculation, is long odds, and the wardsman would probably have escaped had he not stumbled over a form when near the doorway, when the one-

legged vengeance was down on him, and, smiting him on the back, brought him down.

For this offence John Copman was brought before the magistrate, and there was also another charge against him: that of surreptitiously introducing tobacco within the workhouse walls.

As is generally known, the fraudulent introduction of tobacco into workhouses for pauper consumption is an offence for which a stiff term of imprisonment may be imposed, and should an inmate, returned at night after a day's outing, be found, on being searched, to have any of the pernicious 'weed' secreted about him, it is confiscated, and he is lucky if his liberty is stopped for no longer than a month.

A sharp look-out is constantly kept, but nevertheless it was more than suspected that 'bacca' was somehow smuggled into the ward John Copman shared with his friends. Exhausted 'quids' were discovered stowed away in places where they were least likely to be found, and one night, after the men were abed, tobacco-smoke was distinctly smelt, and, on search being made, the still-warm bowl of a pipe was found beneath the bedstead on which Mr. Copman was peacefully slumbering. Shortly after that person

had his day out, and when he came home he was searched as usual, and came out of the ordeal scatheless.

He unshipped his wooden leg, as was his custom, before he got into bed, and laid it by him handy for strapping on again next morning, but when he awoke his timber support had vanished.

There was strange consternation amongst the occupiers of beds immediately adjacent to his own when he made his loss known, and more still when presently the wardsman and the master were seen approaching, the latter carrying John's wooden leg in one hand, and in the other a four-ounce packet of tobacco.

'Copman,' said the master, 'here is a little matter I should like you to explain—this is your wooden leg, I believe?'

'It is the on'y one in the ward,' replied John evasively, 'so I s'pose it must be.'

'And this is your tobacco?'

'Never see it before in my life,' returned John unblushingly.

'But it was found secreted in this hollow that has been artfully made in the wood just under where your stump rests.'

'Think of that now!' said John innocently.

'It is four year ago since I bought that leg second-hand, and never knowed that bacca was stowed there. It's a bit dry, ain't it?'

But the master, exhibiting it, proved to Mr. Copman that it was quite moist, and evidently a recent purchase, and before quitting the ward directed the wardsman to send for a constable and have Mr. Copman taken into custody.

The detected smuggler grew white with rage.

'It must have been you, you sneaking warmint! that rounded on me,' he remarked to the wardsman.

And the impeachment not being denied, Copman, using his wooden leg as a weapon of attack, assaulted the wardsman in the way described. When brought before the magistrate, prisoner found that he had been further 'rounded' on. One of his own friends had turned traitor, and was put in the witness-box to swear that the accused had been 'carrying on the same game' for several months, doling out the tobacco to his comrades in 'pennorths,' and making about fifty per cent. profit on it. For each offence he was sent to prison for six weeks with hard labour.

Probably it is due to the undeniable fact that to be deprived of tobacco is, to a man accustomed to regard it as one of life's greatest luxuries, one of the most severe punishments that can be inflicted on him—that it is as rigorously denied to the able-bodied habitual pauper as to the individual guilty of crime and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

Even in penal servitude a convict may hope for an occasional taste of it. Unless the rules and regulations in operation at Portland have of late years been made more stringent, the toiler in the stone quarries, the red 'P.'s' on whose jacket and knickers distinguish him from the free-worker labouring on the same ground, can, by the exercise of a little ingenuity, provide himself to a limited extent with the luxury in question.

It is, or used to be, managed in this way: The man under sentence, who has friends in the world of freedom with a little money to spare, scrawls on a piece of slate or a flake of stone directions to whom to write, say, for a half-sovereign. It is not difficult for him to catch the eye of some free-worker who has no objection to engage in such business, and this achieved, the rough-and-ready

instructions are kicked towards the latter when the warder of the gang happens to have his attention otherwise engaged.

The man picks it up, and speculating a penny stamp on the chance of realizing five shillings, he writes to the person indicated, giving the convict's number, and suggesting that a monetary enclosure should be forwarded to him for the said convict's benefit. Not uncommonly the transaction has a successful issue. The free-quarryman receives the ten shillings, keeps five for his fee as commission agent, and invests the remainder in tobacco of the cake kind, and conveys it to the convict a portion at a time. A nod and a wink give the latter to understand that it is all right, the little cake of 'hard' is placed under a stone and trodden down, and the joyful 'lag' presently secures it.

He may not keep it all for his own consumption, but trade it away on advantageous terms. There used to be a recognised tariff of equivalent value. One 'wing' (just a single leaf) was worth a 'sixer'—a six-ounce ration loaf; 'one chaw,' a 'sixer' and a 'bull'—a loaf and a ration of meat; a quarter of an ounce cake, 'two bulls and a pudding'—two meat rations and a suet pudding allowed on certain days. Until the ex-

change can be made, the man who is hungering for a taste of tobacco, having no pockets in his dress, carried the food of which he had deprived himself in his bosom, concealed by his flannel shirt.

CHAPTER VII

THE BURGLARY BUSINESS

Burglars and bunglers—A master cracksman's pride in his craft—Burglary and bookbinding—His good friend the police-court missionary—Back and back again to the old game—Reformed at last—Honest and prosperous for a whole year—Once again the irresistible impulse—Returned to the 'broad arrow'—Burglars British and foreign—Great burglar catch at Shadwell—Twelve in a row at Thames Court—'Put-up' jobs—Burglars baffled by a parrot—Thrilling adventures of two Whitechapel cracksmen—Imprisoned in a cheese warehouse—Three days of cheese diet with nothing to drink.

ONLY that the habitual criminal is as a matter of course a liar and not to be trusted, no matter the nature of one's dealings with him, it would be instructive as well as entertaining if an experienced burglar—not a professional of high standing, but, say, a third-class operator, one whose talents would never enable him to claim to be anything more than a mere journeyman—were to make known frankly and fully what are the allurements that

make a man of thievish proclivities prefer the nocturnal line of business to that which may be done with as great profit presumably and with far less personal risk by daylight.

One can understand a master of the craft taking a sort of pride in it. His plans are laid with consummate skill, and, aided by qualified assistants, the work he undertakes is accomplished so neatly and with such cool audacity and daring, that, should it appear in next morning's newspaper that the rascals were captured after the 'crack' had been successfully completed, and they were on the point of making off with the booty, one might be almost excused a first feeling of sympathy with the baffled midnight marauders.

But these are cracksmen of the first order of merit. While luck lasts, in the intervals of business they are in a position to live luxuriously. They have plenty of money to spend or to sport with, and are able to dress according to their taste and wear the jewellery they have the whim for. When reverse of fortune comes, no doubt they are enabled to bear their spell of punishment with greater fortitude by keeping steadily in mind that in all probability, within a month of their release, their convict fingers will again have

become accustomed to the feel of crisp bank-notes, and their first bottle of 'fizz' will obliterate all recollection of the taste of prison gruel.

But how different with the miserably misguided wrong-doer, who will be a burglar when he is scarcely expert enough to make a living by petty larceny, with the result that his 'burgles' are mostly bungles, and though while at large he earns somewhat less than the average bricklayer, when caught he is sentenced to as long a term as if he had looted a goldsmith's shop in Regent Street and come away with every pocket bulging with 'swag.'

That there are men of unscrupulous proclivities for whom the crime of burglary has an attraction that is irresistible was well illustrated in an instance related to me by Mr. Holmes, the long-experienced 'missionary' attached to North London Police Court.

Reckoned among the many clients with whom his compassionate duties brought him in contact was a young man of intelligence, who, while yet in his teens, had forsaken his lawful trade, which was bookbinding, and taken to burglary.

His daring being equal to his skill, after his first few exploits he was taken and convicted, his

sentence being eighteen months' imprisonment. As soon as released he again went burgling, but within the year was once more taken, his second sentence being three years. It was when he was free again that Mr. Holmes made his acquaintance. He applied to that gentleman for assistance, being determined, as he declared, to lead an amended life.

Being impressed by the man's earnestness, the kind-hearted missionary took an interest in him. He provided him with a few bookbinding tools, and for a time the penitent burglar kept steadily at work and remained honest. But all on a sudden, and without there being the least necessity for it, he broke into a dwelling-house at midnight, and, taken red-handed, he went into penal servitude again, this time for four years.

While awaiting his trial Mr. Holmes saw him frequently, and questioned him as to why he had so unexpectedly relapsed. He could give no explanation. He had money in his pocket at the time and plenty of bookbinding to do. He had not, he declared, been brooding on the 'old game,' or even thinking about it. He had done a hard day's work, and was taking a sober walk (he was a teetotaler) before he went to bed, when, on

passing a house, it somehow struck him that it would be the easiest thing in the world to break in, and, the sudden temptation proving irresistible, within five minutes he was inside and ransacking the drawing-room.

It was on that occasion Mr. Holmes remarked to him:

'I can't understand where the temptation comes in, or how a man of intelligence like yourself can engage in such a mean and cowardly business.'

But with the certainty of another lengthy spell of 'penal' overhanging him, the ingrain burglar could not bear to hear the cracksman's profession spoken of so disparagingly. Suddenly kindling to enthusiasm, he replied:

'Ah, Mr. Holmes, you think that, but you don't know. Cowardly! Why, what could be bolder? See the obstacles a man has to overcome and the skill and cleverness he has to exercise, to accomplish what his mind is bent on! And he does accomplish it. In spite of the police, in spite of locks and bars, and the danger of people waking and going for him with a revolver, he gets in, and all he can lay hands on is his own. Maybe it is a fool's game as compared with working honestly, but don't say that it is cowardly.'

So he was sent away for four years, and on his release he again applied to the man who had previously befriended him, and it was not to be wondered at if he met with a somewhat cool reception. But this time it really appeared as though he had sincerely and thoroughly resolved to shun the ways of wickedness in future. It had, he said, been his daily and nightly resolve to do so, and he begged and implored for just one more chance.

As need not be said, he did not beg in vain. Once more he was provided with the tools of his trade, and some bookbinding was found for him to do. And now it seemed that he meant to keep his word manfully. In the one little room that was rented for him he worked early and late, and lived frugally, and saved money. Being expert and clever at his trade, it was not difficult to find him plenty to do, and, business continuing to prosper, he employed a man to assist him, and another after that. On the recommendation of Mr. Holmes, the Judge who last tried the ex-burglar became one of his best customers, and he was entrusted with the job of rebinding a number of books belonging to his lordship's law library.

So things went on for many months—for nearly

a year—without the faintest indication of relapse or backsliding.

The burglar-bookbinder had now three journeymen in his employ, and he and Mr. Holmes saw each other frequently and had pleasant chats together. But the end was approaching.

Mr. Holmes resided in the Kingsland Road, and slept in a front room overlooking that thoroughfare. One night, after he had been abed but a short time, he heard a great outcry in the street and a blowing of police-whistles, and hurrying down to see what was the matter, as soon as he emerged from his house he saw a man walking, a prisoner, between two constables, and, lo and behold! it was the bookbinder!

It was the old story, but more amazing. As he confessed to Mr. Holmes, his plunging again into crime was not the outcome of premeditation. He never was more prosperous than at the time. He had been taking home some work, and had received the money—four sovereigns—for it. This money he had in his pocket, and was soberly on his way home, when, passing a wholesale boot and shoe warehouse, he chanced to notice the exceptionally secure fastenings, and it was like a challenge to him. He went at the job 'bare-

handed,' and in a minute or two effected an entry.

But his movements had been observed by someone, who informed the police, and as he was emerging from the premises he was pursued and captured. And his old record being brought up against him, he was sentenced to five years' penal servitude. What he will do when his time expires remains to be seen.

Next to murder, there is no crime in which that portion of the public that seek entertainment at the police court take such a lively interest as burglary; and the same remark applies, though, perhaps, in lesser degree, to the court officials and the policemen in attendance, more especially, of course, should the culprit be a man of notorious character with a black record against him.

When he is escorted into the dock, the motley mob that comprises the auditorium crane their necks to have a look at him, and should it happen that, simultaneously with his being brought up, the constables in charge of the case produce and range along the ledge of the witness-box the identical 'jemmy' with which the midnight marauder not only forced the safe, but savagely assaulted the police as well, together with the steel

wedges and the centre-bit he used on the occasion, and the bit of candle that showed him a light, and the box of silent matches with which he was provided, the eager whispering at the rear of the court becomes so distinctly audible that the outraged usher proclaims 'Silence!' and that in such a threatening tone that the offenders instantly become mum as mice.

As a rule, burglars are not a banded brotherhood. Occasionally the 'operator' works single-handed, but more often there are two in it, and sometimes three. It is different as regards foreign 'professionals' engaged in the same line of business. There are a great number in England at the present time, they having seemingly discovered either that there is richer booty to be obtained here than in their own country, or that we are behind the times as regards locks and bars and door and window fastenings. These foreign burglars, in London, usually herd together—an arrangement to which the police authorities have no objection.

It is not many months ago that a grand haul of the villains in question was made at Shadwell, with the result that one morning there appeared at Thames Court the unprecedented spectacle of

nine foreign burglars all in a row, together with three receivers, who habitually bought from the robbers all that the desperate crew could lay hands on. And not the least curious part of the affair was that the whole batch was captured at one and the same time—six o'clock in the morning—in a six-roomed house in a back-street. How the brilliant feat was accomplished did not transpire, but the house was entered while the whole number of robbers were unsuspectingly asleep in the different rooms (several of the poor fellows had been out 'on business' part of the night, and were therefore very tired), and, each apartment having been stealthily invaded, the slumberers were gently awakened and handcuffed almost before they were aware of it. A large amount of valuable property, chiefly products of burglaries committed within the previous three months in the neighbourhoods of Hendon and Hampstead, was recovered.

Along with the burglars the police seized an interesting collection of tools of the craft, and the fact of their being mostly of foreign make showed that the gang had come to England intending business, and it was some satisfaction to gather from the critical remarks of old and experienced

policemen that the 'jemmies,' etc., 'made in Germany' were inferior to the British-manufactured articles affected by our own cracksmen.

And here it may be asked, Who are the tool-makers who are responsible for the production of the various implements that play a part in the frequent 'burgles' that take place in London and its suburbs? Where are the jemmies, the chisels, the augurs, the peculiarly-constructed 'bits and stocks' obtainable? Not at an ordinary tool-maker's, and presumably, if a novice about to embark in the business gave an order to an honest mechanic to make him certain articles of a burglarious pattern he would decline, or pretend to comply, and meanwhile communicate with the police.

The most useful of a 'cracksman's set' is the jemmy. It is not much to look at; it is merely a miniature crowbar—in fact, usually about fifteen inches long, two inches in circumference, with a 'claw' at one end and a chisel-head at the other. Any blacksmith could shape it on his anvil; but it would be of little practical use made in common iron. To be a jemmy worthy of being so called it should be of hardened steel of the finest quality, and able to bear all the strain a strong-wristed

man could put on it. A master of the craft naturally takes as much pride in his 'kit' as a joiner or cabinet-maker. I once saw a burglar at Marylebone Police Court who had been taken a few hours previously while busy at 'work' on the outer door of a family mansion at Hampstead, and at the time he was wearing a 'tool-belt,' strapped over his waistcoat and made of chamois-leather, with neat receptacles for seven different implements, all useful in housebreaking and of quite superior make and finish.

One might reasonably assume that before a burglar decided that a job was worth setting about he would require to know more about a residence and its occupants than could possibly be ascertained by an exterior survey. It would seem, however, that as a rule the midnight invader 'chances his luck.'

'Put-up' burglaries—that is to say, those that are arranged with the connivance of dishonest servants of the household—are rare. One reads in 'Oliver Twist' that, when the projected 'cracking of a crib' looked unpromising, Mr. Fagin was wroth, and declared that the preliminaries had not been properly attended to. To this Bill Sykes, the bold burglar, demurred. As agent in advance,

he had sent his comrade, who had been 'hanging about' the place for a fortnight, and yet couldn't get one of the female domestics 'into a line,' despite the ingenious device of wearing false whiskers and a canary waistcoat the whole of the time. No doubt the 'flash Toby Crackits' of the present day would find it advantageous, even without the false whiskers and canary waistcoat, to be shown over the house by the cook or housemaid who had fallen in love with them, but they appear to be able to do tolerably well without such adventitious assistance.

One easy way of ascertaining all about the locks, bars, and bolts of residences that at present are uninhabited and awaiting an eligible tenant is for a respectably-dressed friend of the burglar to wait on the house-agent and ask particulars. In most cases he will be entrusted with the keys that he may look over the premises, and of course he can take impressions of them all and, should it afterwards appear desirable, have other keys made from the patterns. But the commonest of modern modes is to manipulate the fastenings of the dining-room window, which is seldom secured by anything more reliable than an ordinary 'latch,' and this can be pushed back with the blade of an

old dinner-knife or even with a strong button-hook.

The success of a burglary is liable to be balked, and that in a way least to be expected. Such an instance occurred at Plaistow about two years since. Who the operators were was never known, but that they were not experienced workmen was shown by the circumstance, either that they had no tools or that they lacked knowledge how to break open a safe after they had obtained access to it. That they had no intention to try even was evident from the fact that they took a hand-barrow to the premises to bring away the cumbrous article intact, and crack it at their leisure.

And they succeeded as far as wrenching the safe from its substantial setting in the counting-house wall, and in bringing it out (it weighed five hundredweight) and placing it on the barrow. But ere they had wheeled it half a dozen yards one of the barrow-wheels came off, and they had to abandon the booty. Had they been aware of the fact that the safe contained more than seven hundred pounds in gold and notes, probably they would have made a more desperate effort to bring it away.

In another case at Kensington a parrot was

instrumental in so spoiling a pretty burglary just at the point of its consummation. It was a 'two-handed' job, and the robbers, who had entered the drawing-room by the window, having ransacked the apartment and packed up the 'swag,' proceeded to the dining-room to see what was there. They were again successful beyond their expectations, and before taking their departure treated themselves to a drop of brandy from a decanter that stood on a sideboard. A second glass followed the first, and while they were drinking it a voice quite close at hand exclaimed, 'Let's have another bottle!'

In his fright the burglar who had the decanter in his hand dropped it with a crash, whereon the parrot set up a shrill scream, in the midst of which were heard voices and the sounds of hasty footsteps overhead. There was nothing for it but to beat a hasty retreat, but not before one of the rascals, who had spied the parrot, in his rage threw it down on to the floor and savagely jumped on it, crushing poor Poll among the wreckage of wirework. The two men then fled empty-handed, but were captured by the police while scaling a garden-wall, and, eventually brought to trial, they were each sentenced to three years' penal servitude.

But however skilfully the burglar may lay his plans and, lacking neither coolness nor courage, set about carrying out the same, he may meet with disaster and disappointment, and provide for himself a trap from which there is no escape or release until he is discovered and captured.

Take the instance of the two adventurous cracksmen who a year or so since arranged between themselves to 'burgle' a cheese-and-provision warehouse in the Whitechapel Road. Having reconnoitred the premises, it was decided that the easiest way to effect an entry would be to mount to the roof of a back warehouse and force a skylight, and, that achieved, lower themselves to the floor by means of a rope knotted at intervals, so that it would afford foothold in climbing up again when the counting-house had been ransacked and the booty secured.

And the necessary preparations having been made, the two started on the job. It was then Friday night, and, whatever their luck, there would be plenty of time for them to make the best of it, for it was Bank Holiday time, and, as they had ascertained, the premises would be closed until Tuesday morning.

With the rope in a coil they climbed to the

roof, and, having forced the skylight, attached one end of it to a strong screw-hook they took with them for the purpose, and which was screwed firmly into the window-frame, and then, one after the other, they descended by the rope. The depth was rather more than they had expected, but the length of rope served within a yard or so, and the first man landed safely, as did the second, or very nearly, when the screw-hook snapped and the rope came rattling down.

It was pitch dark, but they had brought with them some matches and a bit of candle, and having lit the latter, they searched about the warehouse hoping to find a ladder long enough to make good the disaster. They found a pair of tall steps, but they did not reach more than half-way up to the skylight, and there was nothing for it but to wait for daylight.

They did so, but were then no better off as regards their ability to reach the skylight. There were hundreds of cheeses of all shapes and sizes in the warehouse, and they tried piling up the larger ones beneath the aperture in the roof fifteen feet above them ; but, after several nasty falls in trying to climb them, they had to desist from the attempt. They could get into the

counting-house (and the forcing of a desk or two disclosed more gold and silver than they expected to find), but the door beyond that led to the street was heavily barred and padlocked on the outside, and there was no escape that way.

They had eaten nothing since early the previous evening, and being by this time hungry, they took out their clasp-knives and commenced eating cheese. They ate their fill, and, their hunger appeased, they were thirsty. Possibly, in their eagerness for food, they had not made a judicious selection, and had partaken of the strongest cheese instead of the mildest. With parched throats and dry tongues they passed the miserable day, and come night they were hungry again as well as thirsty, and remembering that Dutch cheese was moister than any other, they ventured on half a pound or so of that sort, and then curled up at the foot of a hill of Cheddars and fell asleep.

But at midnight they were awake again. The Dutch cheese was moist, but it was likewise salt, and a hotter thirst than ever possessed them. But there was no relief for them, and they lay till daylight and then made another search, and in a remote part of the warehouse came on a shelf where lard was stored. For an article of substance

nothing can be moister than lard, so they joyfully took down a bladder and, with their knives, dug away at it. It was luscious as ice-cream, and they kept on at it, feeling that it did them good.

But their satisfaction was of short duration. Within an hour they began to feel unwell, and were seized with sickness as well as with internal agonies, and passed the greater part of that day (Sunday) prostrate and moaning, and when they recovered somewhat, being empty, they grew hungry once more.

What were they to do? They were famishing for food in the midst of tons of—horror of horrors —cheese!

True, there was the lard!

But they shuddered at the mere thought of it. There was but one alternative, and they came to agreement on it without a word spoken. They hurried to the barred door that opened on to the street and banged away at it till a passing policeman heard the noise, and spoke to them through the door, asking what was the matter. They told him through the keyhole.

Brought before the magistrate and charged with the burglary, they penitently suggested that the suffering they had endured might be taken as

atoning for the crime they had committed ; but against that plausible plea was the damaging fact that both had been several times convicted of similar offences, and that one of them had his 'ticket of leave,' granted him but a fortnight previously, in his pocket when he was taken. Committed for trial, they were sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BEGGAR BROTHERHOOD

Better beg than steal—The after-dark lurk—Bamboozling a philanthropist—The pilgrim of Poplar—How he was lodged, clothed and fed, and finally walked off with his benefactor's overcoat and umbrella—The theatre-door cab-cadger—The highwayman beggar—'A man can't see his wife and child starve, and, wot's more, I ain't going to'—The persuasive ways of Patrick Connell—The bully beggar and the baker—The 'shiverer'; what he endures and what he earns—The genteel cadger—The nice old lady who comes with a rat-tat at the door—The reduced gentleman dodge.

ALL the organizations that ever have been, or are likely to be, introduced with the object of putting a stop to indiscriminate almsgiving will never prove completely successful; it is neither to be hoped nor desired that they should. There will always be a large number of kind-hearted folk who, having a trifle to spare, have no regard for methodical giving, but bestow what they can afford just whenever the cry of distress awakens

their compassion, and that without pausing to make inquiry or to have the tale of woe they have listened to undeniably verified.

Strictly speaking, it is neither a sin nor a crime to beg when the pinch of poverty has become so acute as to be no longer endurable. The man or woman who by stress of misfortune is reduced to homelessness and hunger had far better beg than steal, though either extreme might be avoided by the destitute person applying for parochial relief. Unfortunately, however, it is found that among more than a few of the deserving poor prejudice against the workhouse is stronger even than the fear of death itself, and such unreasonable folk, if they would live at all, must either beg or resort to robbery.

It may even be said that public morality to an extent benefits by indiscriminate charity, inasmuch as encouragement given to beggars lessens the temptation for that class of individuals to adopt the criminal alternative.

Of all cases that appear in the police reports none are so likely to excite compassion as those that relate to the taking into custody and bringing before a magistrate some man or woman detected in the act of begging in the street at dead of

night, their excuse being that they were outcast and utterly destitute. It would naturally appear to the tender-hearted and inexperienced that such a plea should be received as a sufficient answer from a person charged with the offence in question, and that the delinquent should not only be immediately released on the circumstances of the case being made known to the inspector on duty at the police-station, but that the wretched individual should be supplied there and then with a warm and comforting meal, as well as with money enough to provide him with a lodging. That there are those who adopt begging as a means of obtaining a lazy livelihood they are quite aware, but that, they think, is only in the daytime, when the world is awake and everybody is pursuing some business or other.

Those unacquainted with the artful ways of the begging fraternity believe that no professional would be so foolish as to go out begging when the curtains of night are drawn and highways and by-ways are deserted, or nearly so, and when those to whom appeal might be made are few and far between. Hence they consider that it is only folk who are desperately driven and almost despairing who implore that a trifle may be bestowed on

them lest they be compelled to pass the bleak hours of night, not in a warm bed, but huddled, shivering, in some nook or corner, where the bull's-eye lamp of the vigilant policeman may not discover them. The warm-hearted philanthropist who, under such circumstances, generously responds to the appeal made to him, and discovers afterwards that he has been bamboozled, may almost be excused if in future he suspects the most pitiful tale that can be 'pitched' him and gives sparingly, if at all.

Such an experience was that of a gentleman, whose name need not be mentioned, who felt so provoked at the impudent imposition to which he was a victim that, meeting the impostor soon afterwards, he gave him into custody; and I am happy to say that, although the merciful man's heart softened when next day he appeared against Peter Doolan, the rascal who served him so badly, and he begged his Worship to deal with him leniently, the worthy magistrate recognised him as a rascal with a record, and punished him accordingly.

As the gentleman told his story, he resided at Clapton, and was proceeding through Rectory Road towards home shortly after midnight (it was

in the month of February, and snow lay thick on the ground), when, as he was passing the dark doorway of a private house, a quavering voice called to him for assistance. The charitable gentleman went back and found an aged man, thinly clad and shivering, who begged to be helped up from the stone step he was sitting on. The good deed done, the white-haired old fellow returned many thanks.

'It was foolish of me in my weak state to sit down,' he said; 'but having walked all the way from Poplar I was very tired, and was tempted to take a few minutes' rest, having several miles yet to go.'

'And where are you going?'

'I am going to Southgate, kind sir; I have a granddaughter living there. She is poor enough herself, God knows, but she wrote to me that she would shelter me for a little time, at any rate.'

'But why do you need her assistance? Why did you come away from Poplar?'

'Because, kind sir, I no longer had a home there. I had to sell my little home. My poor old wife died, sir, and with her last breath she implored me, if I could anyhow help it, not to let the parish bury her, and I promised it, sir. But

what was I to do? The only way was to sell the bits of furniture, and that I did; and there being a fortnight's rent owing at the time, the landlord came and took possession and turned me into the street penniless as I was. Never mind, I shall soon get to Southgate. Is it far from here, can you tell me, sir?'

On being informed that it was fully four miles, the sorely afflicted old fellow was in despair, and began to cry. He could never accomplish the distance, he said, and should have to wait till morning—that was to say, if he was not frozen to death in the night. And with that he sat himself down on the stone step again.

'Of course,' said the prosecutor, addressing the magistrate, 'I could not leave him so, and invited him to come home to my house, where he could stay the night, and I would see what could be done for him in the morning. He thankfully accepted the offer, and he had part of the hot supper my housekeeper had prepared for me, and a bed was made up for him in a spare room; but before he retired I fetched him a suit of my own clothes that was in decent condition, and gave him a pair of my boots as well, to put on in the morning instead of his own rags; and as he was

anxious to make an early start for Southgate, I likewise gave him half a crown in case he felt disposed to get away before I was up. And when I came down next morning, your Worship, he was already gone, and besides the clothes I had supplied him with he had taken from the hall a nearly new overcoat and a silk umbrella. Of course, I never expected to see the fellow or my property again, but happening to be in Wentworth Street, Whitechapel, three days afterwards — I have manufacturing premises at the East End — I saw a crowd outside a public-house, and a policeman who was endeavouring to take into custody a wretched-looking, drunken object, who was the more conspicuous for his carrying a silk umbrella under his arm. This is the article, your Worship,' continued prosecutor, holding up a nice-looking silk umbrella, 'and, as you will perceive, it has a peculiarly carved ivory handle. As soon as that caught my eye I knew that it was mine, and pushed my way through the crowd and told the policeman so. Then I discovered that the ragged, drunken man was the midnight beggar I had assisted and who had treated me so ungratefully, and gave him into custody.'

A pawnbroker gave evidence that the previous

afternoon prisoner came into his shop and offered the umbrella in question in pawn for eighteenpence. Seeing that it was nearly new, and that it must have cost at least two guineas, witness asked him how he came by it, and he replied that he had been out cadging Clapton way, and that a 'soft-hearted old mug' he cadged from gave it him because he had no ha'pence with him.

'As that seemed rather unlikely,' said witness, 'I followed him out of the shop and informed a policeman.'

When searched at the station, two pawn-tickets were found on Doolan, one relating to a pair of boots on which two shillings had been advanced, and the other to an overcoat pledged for twelve shillings.

Asked what he had to say for himself, Doolan replied impudently he was surprised that a person looking so much like a gentleman as prosecutor did should act so meanly. He was ready to take a solemn oath that prosecutor gave him the overcoat and the umbrella as well when he gave him the other things. He might have been sorry for it afterwards, but that was no reason why, seeing him (prisoner) three days after, he should give him in custody for stealing it.

Prosecutor appealed to the magistrate to treat the prisoner leniently. He now felt that he himself was to some extent to blame for giving a strange man, of whose character he knew nothing, such an easy opportunity to commit robbery.

His Worship remarked that there was something besides that to be taken into account, and that was the many previous convictions against prisoner. He had treated prosecutor with gross ingratitude, and the impudent defence he had made showed how little he regretted it. He would now be sent to prison for six months with hard labour.

There is a class of beggars from whom it is difficult for a compassionate man to withhold his pity. At the West End police-courts scarcely a morning passes but there are brought up to answer for the previous night's offences two or three poor, wretched-looking lads, the charge against them being that they were seen soliciting pence from cab-riders on the excuse that they had earned the same by the voluntary service of opening the door of the vehicle for the ladies and gentlemen passing thereto from the theatre or other place of entertainment.

That such tattered and muddy mendicants are an eyesore and occasionally an annoyance must be admitted, but that they are guilty of a misdemeanour so grave as to deserve a long term of imprisonment may be questioned. The police would, no doubt, be neglecting their duty if they allowed these ragamuffin exploiters to defy control, but it serves as painful proof of how desperately hard-up some of them are, when, as not unfrequently transpires, the theatre cab-cadger, taken red-handed in the Strand, has trudged it, tattered and well-nigh shoeless, all the way from Walworth or Battersea, and with the same distance to traverse after midnight when the theatre-doors are closed and it is all over, richer, maybe, by not more than six-pennorth of ha'pence than when he set out from home.

With but few exceptions, there is an unmistakable inclination on the part of London magistrates to treat the generality of delinquents brought before them with more leniency than formerly; but in one particular they appear to be almost unanimous, and that is that street beggars should be severely dealt with, and a month's imprisonment is the penalty commonly imposed.

That such a sentence is not regarded as one

to be inflicted on all cases of trivial importance is shown by the fact that the brute addicted to exercising his fists on his unfortunate wife's face and body sometimes gets no more, and it could scarcely be maintained that begging is a crime to be placed on a par with savage assault and battery.

It should be very distinctly understood, however, that there are all sorts and conditions of after-dark beggars, and that some of them are of the ruffian breed pure and simple. Take the able-bodied rascal who lurks after the lamps are lit in suburban districts for preference, and waylays unprotected females, young or old, the latter for choice.

Under pretence of soliciting alms, he really demands money, and that with so much of menace that, for fear of savage assault, his victims dare not refuse. The ruffian in question sometimes works single-handed, but more often he has a female companion as bad as himself, who carries, half concealed by her tattered shawl, what purports to be a young infant, but which, if examined, would probably prove to be merely a bundle of rags enveloped in a hood and bedgown. The tone adopted is not usually that of the whining mendi-

cant, but that of the desperate fellow, homeless and hungry, outcast at night with his suffering wife and her innocent babe.

'Don't mistake us for common beggars, lady. This is the first time in my life I ever sunk myself so low, but a man can't see his wife and babe starve in the cold streets, and, what's more, I don't mean to. Nobody with a 'art in her buzum, and though it was only sixpence in her pocket, would wish us to do so, knowing that a desperate man so situated ain't likely to stick at nothing when a deaf ear is turned to him.'

And this thinly-veiled threat proving ineffective, more probably because the person importuned is afraid to exhibit her purse than that she is disinclined to respond to the appeal, foul abuse follows, to which the starving wife liberally contributes, until, in terror of personal violence, the victim complies with the highway-robbers' demand, and is thankful to escape so cheaply.

In order to avoid the charge of street begging, should it be preferred against them, the members of this dangerous fraternity are usually provided with a few items of pedlary of a sort the least likely to be purchased by a lady or gentleman hurrying home at night time. Sometimes it is a

bunch or two of stale groundsel, a few cakes of paste-blacking, or a tangle of shoe-laces, sometimes a handful of withered flowers.

The last-mentioned was the stock in trade of a ruffian beggar named Patrick Connell, who was brought up at North London court charged with violently assaulting a gentleman residing in Tollington Park.

As he was proceeding home, the time being between ten and eleven o'clock at night, he was accosted by Connell, who exhibited a bunch of decayed hyacinths and demanded a penny. This was refused, but the sturdy beggar was not so easily got rid of. He still followed at prosecutor's heels, reiterating his demand, till he was told rather sharply not to continue the annoyance.

This exasperated Mr. Connell to violent measures. Using vile language, he seized prosecutor by the throat, at the same time swearing that he would choke him.

A policeman was called, and he was given into custody, but a night in the cells did not subdue prisoner's savage spirit. Asked what he had to say, he replied insolently, 'I was trying to sell my flowers and he insulted me. I told him I would wring his nose, and so I would.'

Mr. Paul Taylor sentenced him to fourteen days' hard labour, which certainly was not more than he deserved.

The bully beggar is another type of the London mendicant class that deserves to be severely dealt with. Of this sort was another Irishman, James O'Brien, with whom Mr. Mead had to deal with at Thames Court.

It remains to be seen whether a month's imprisonment is sufficient to cure Mr. O'Brien of the mistaken notion that his deeply-rooted animosity against this country on account of wrongs inflicted on Ireland a century since entitles him to invade England single-handed, seemingly with no other purpose than to defy the law and at the same time levy promiscuous tribute.

Tattered and tanned, and approaching six feet in height, having presumably but just arrived at a London port, O'Brien, with his means exhausted in paying his passage, walked from the docks as far as Commercial Road, and there boldly entered a baker's shop. There were two other customers at the time there, and, possibly not over-much liking the appearance of the third, the baker asked him what he wanted. Mr. O'Brien replied that he was not pressed for time, and would await his

turn. Again the shopkeeper inquired what he wanted, and then the Irishman spoke.

'What do you mane, sor? You see that I'm an Irishman, and you dare to ask me what I want! It's jist everything I want, and for the prisent, anyway, I'll thank ye for jist a thrifle of money.'

To this the baker not unreasonably replied that he did not keep a shop to give away money, adding that he had to work hard for it.

'Thin give me a loaf,' said Mr. O'Brien.

'We don't give loaves away, and the sooner you are out of my shop the better.'

'And what will happen if I don't get out?' asked the Irishman, cocking his battered tall hat.

'I replied,' said the German baker, continuing his evidence, 'that I should have to put him out, and I put my hand on him for the purpose. And no sooner had I done so than he showed fight; but I managed to shove him into the street. I lost sight of him for a minute or so, and then I saw him outside the shop in an aiming attitude, and with a large piece of granite-stone in his hand. Before I could get out of the way he threw it, and it passed through the plate-glass window and brushed past my head.'

'Have you any question to ask prosecutor?' Mr. Mead inquired of the prisoner.

'Shure I've siveral, yer Washup. Why haven't you told his Washup about the provocation?'

'There was no provocation.'

'What! Do you mane to say it was me who had the shtick?'

'I don't know anything about a stick.'

'Well, thin, the pole thing shtandin' in the corner before you snatched it up.'

'Certainly I took up the pole, as you call it, when you was getting the best of me struggling in the shop.'

'There, now, your Washup, now you've got the truth! That was the mane advantage he tuk ov me havin' no shtick to defind meself with.'

Mr. Mead: 'And the revenge you took was to search for a stone big and heavy enough which you threw through a large and expensive sheet of glass. You will go to prison for a month.'

Mr. O'Brien bitterly: 'And yit we're tould that we are not a down-throdden people. I'm thinkin' it isn't the only month I shall have to do if I stay long in this illigant counthry.'

As with the London thief, so with the ordinary street beggar. To the uninitiated it is inexplic-

able how those who work at either regularly and diligently find the game, as the saying is, worth the candle.

As for the predatory prowler who, even as a thief, is so unskilful that it is sheer luck when he is successful in committing a larcency, he is almost invariably a poor wretch with broken boots and a coat out at elbows, and, as regards food, is never so well provided as when he is in prison. Why, under such conditions, does he not at length see the folly, if not the iniquity, of his ways, and take to honest employment, however humble ?

It cannot be that the reason is he is a lazy man. The unskilful pickpocket or petty pilferer has as a rule less leisure than the dock labourer. The chief difficulty he has to contend against is that he is a marked man, and well known to every uniformed constable and detective in the locality where he operates, and whenever he takes his walks abroad he is regarded with suspicion and watched.

One might suppose that he would see his advantage in constantly shifting the scene of action, and as soon as one district grew too 'warm' for him retreat to another. But this he seldom or

never does. He may, after having been in 'trouble,' shift his lodging from one street to the next, but that usually is the extent of his migration, and the consequence is that a person whom he has robbed has only to give the police though never so slight a clue to his identity, and for a certainty he will be in custody before the day is out. The life he leads is a miserable one from every aspect, and yet he clings to it, taking his repeated terms of imprisonment as matters of course, and, being released on a Saturday, returns to 'work' again on Monday morning, being aware that the question of dinner or no dinner depends on thief's luck.

The livelihood of the habitual beggar may not be as precarious, but it is a business that yields a profit just as meagre. The accomplished cadger —the skilled artiste of enterprise and ability— may be able to live in comfortable lodgings, dine at a restaurant, and smoke sixpenny cigars; but the commonplace brethren of the order have to be content with humbler fare, and sleep at nights in a bed that costs fourpence at a common lodging-house. They may do a bit better at special times —when hard frost prevails, or the roadways are inches deep in snow-slush. On such occasions

the beggar who 'knows his book' will appear at his wretchedest; but, though his rags and his blue toes treading the icy mud may gain him an extra half-crown in the course of the day, at what cost to his personal comfort, to say nothing about his health!

But the beggar and cadger tribes do not all adopt a livery of rags and tatters. There are genteelly dressed mendicants, women as well as men, the latter sometimes in black broadcloth and snowy-fronted linen, and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles.

Recently a charge was preferred at Marlborough Street by the Mendicity Society in which it was proved that a man and his wife, both working the same 'dodge' in different parts of the same district, earned between them as much as thirty shillings a day.

They were aged people, well dressed, and of benevolent aspect. It was not in their own behalf they were soliciting. Oh dear no! After a genteel 'rat-tat' at the door, the lady or gentleman introduced themselves as being deeply interested in providing the poorest of poor children in the most destitute neighbourhoods with food, and if they were barefoot with boots to wear.

The old lady was described by the mendicity officer as by being far the most accomplished impostor of the two. With the aid of the local directory it is of course possible to know who resides at every house in the road or square that is being 'worked' at the time. The servant who answers the door, being thus imposed on, informs her mistress that a lady wishes to speak with her.

'My dear Mrs. Blank, you will, I feel sure, excuse the liberty I am taking, or if you will not, and pack me off as a beggar, I must put up with it; for, really and truly, I have come begging. You have heard, no doubt, of the interest I take in the poor little children—the wee starvelings that suffer so much in their miserable homes at this, and, indeed, at all times of the year. I have had so many sorrowful cases put before me, and which want of means has compelled me to turn a deaf ear to, that at last I took courage, and resolved to go alms-seeking myself in their behalf, and if it is no more than a mere sixpence you can spare, I shall be thankful to receive it.'

And the 'mere sixpence' contributed (it is seldom refused) is duly entered on the spot in a book the nice old lady carries, and as there is likewise printed on it her proper name and

address, there are difficulties in the way of an off-hand prosecution. How many years since it is that the aged pair of impostors were first convicted may be judged from the fact that a year ago I was present in court when the old lady was sent to gaol for her fifteenth offence, her venerable partner being at the time a prisoner at Pentonville.

It is by no means improbable that many persons reading these pages (the individual in question practises in most of the suburbs of London) will be surprised to learn that that highly-respectable and well-spoken poor gentleman, to whose brief but pathetic story they listened, and on whom they, almost with an apology, bestowed a shilling, is an experienced street beggar who, up to the present time, has been ten times summarily convicted, and once sent to the sessions, where he was sentenced to twelve months' hard labour as an incorrigible rogue and vagabond.

Judging from his polite address and his genteel appearance, it seems impossible that this can be true ; but when I saw him at Marlborough Street he had not one word to say in denial of the impeachment, nor would it have much availed him if he had, since an old acquaintance, Mr.

Fryer, the mendicity officer, was present, and would, if required, presently be put in the witness-box to speak as to his antecedents.

The prosecutor in the case was an inspector of police who happened to be out walking the previous (Sunday) evening when the gentleman-beggar addressed him. He was attired as usual in black, with a mourning-band round his hat, and he wore black kid gloves, and carried a neat umbrella. It was dusk of evening, and he did not recognise the inspector, who was in private clothes, and, respectfully raising his hat, thus addressed the prosecutor:

'Sir, if you will kindly permit me to speak with you for a few moments you will be conferring a great favour on me. To come to the point at once, notwithstanding my respectable appearance, I am utterly destitute, I am homeless, I am hungry. You will, as a gentleman, spare me the pain of explaining to you how I have sunk to my present wretched condition. Pity and help me, though it be only with the merest trifle—enough to buy me one poor meal and pay for the humblest bed—and, though I may never see you again, I shall ever hold you in kindly remembrance.'

Mr. Inspector listened to the touching appeal with respectful attention, and politely made answer :

'Sir, I am happy to inform you that it is in my power to provide you with a bed and breakfast, and you shall have both. It would be unkind of me to refuse an old acquaintance. You are Mr. John Culmer, the gentleman-beggar, if I am not mistaken. Will you walk quietly with me to the station, or shall I call a constable?'

Such was the inspector's evidence in the witness-box, and he further added that, on searching prisoner at the station, the sum of nine shillings was found on him. His Worship was further informed that Culmer had apartments in a respectable house at Maida Vale, and paid a guinea a week for board and lodging.

Mr. Denman sent him to prison for three months, at the same time remarking that if he came before him again he would be sent for trial.

CHAPTER IX

THE 'DRINK' DISEASE

The Inebriates Act a failure—The modern Triumph of Bacchus—The Bill's flagrant defects—No provision for male drunkards—The 'ticket-of-leave' arrangement a mistake—A case in point—'I mean to go to hell my own way'—No remedy for the direst of domestic calamities—Mr. Rose's recommendation—Mr. Plowden's amendment—Chastizing a wife with the bellows—Astonishing a cowardly coachsmith — The wife who wouldn't 'hop out of bed' at her husband's bidding—Too lazy to get drunk—The man who sold the teeth out of his head for a 'last good drunk.'

DRUNKEN women are, unhappily, anything but a rarity in the dock at the police-court. Husbands, brothers, and fathers are of course seen there as well; but, as every magistrate having experience of the lower districts of the Metropolis is in a position to attest, the women outnumber the men at the rate of nearly two to one, while as regards callousness and an utter absence of shame there

is no comparison between the sexes at their worst.

Confirmed sot though a man may be, after a night in a comfortless cell, when brought before the magistrate next morning, he will hang his head, and say at least that he is very sorry; but when a woman has become so far degraded, she is bold and defiant, and no sentence that can be passed on her is so severe but she will lightly declare her ability to do that little lot 'on her head.'

At the latter end of the year 1900 a measure was successfully carried in Parliament, the object of which was to check the deplorable and increasing evil of habitual drunkenness, especially among the lower labouring classes. By virtue of the Act in question, Metropolitan magistrates were empowered to sentence to detention for one, two, or three years, any person charged with drunkenness, and against whom there were three recorded convictions during the previous year.

In the face of the fact that about three-fourths of the daily charges with which magistrates have to deal come under the heading of 'drunk and disorderly,' it will be easily understood that the said Act was hailed as a boon and a blessing, especially by those magistrates whose duty it

is to preside at such courts as Worship Street, Clerkenwell, Thames, and Southwark, where not uncommonly on Monday morning as many as fifty or sixty cases of drunkenness have to be dealt with. Here at last was an opportunity for getting rid of dozens of those utterly incorrigible and constant customers whose convictions per annum numbered not three, but thirty, and who, being old residents in the district, could boast of having been 'before the beak' a hundred and fifty times within the space of five or six years. Now, however, the end of such a disgraceful state of affairs seemed within measurable distance.

Necessary arrangements had, of course, to be made; but there was no need for uneasiness on that score, since the Act was passed in July and did not come into operation until the following January. This was convenient in more ways than one. Not only would it enable the authorities to provide suitable asylums for the inebriates sentenced to detention, it afforded magistrates opportunity to give, to those to whom the Act was most likely to apply, fair and sufficient warning of what would most certainly happen to them come the commencement of the new year if they did not mend their ways. So sure as a habitual

inebriate came before him, his Worship addressed him or her in some such terms as these:

'Now, please bear in mind what I am going to tell you. If you are again brought here on this same charge, on or after the first of January next, it will then be in my power to order you into confinement for one, two, or three years, and you may rely on it that in cases such as yours I shall apply the law to its full extent.'

And the old offenders were visibly affected, knowing that their fate was a foregone conclusion, and left the dock with an expression on their faces it was hard to interpret or say whether it indicated that, since it could not be helped, it must be submitted to, or that they intended to make the most of their remaining short length of tether, and would get doubly drunk between that time and the end of the year.

But, and more shame for the Legislature, the 'habitual' had the laugh of the worthy magistrate after all. The eventful first of January came, and presently one of the doomed ones faced the bench with a haggard visage, and buoyed up only by the hope that the sentence might be only one year and not three. But better even than that was in store for her.

'I very much regret to have to inform you, Mary Tipple, that, in consequence of the Government having at present provided no place where you can be received according to the terms of the new Act, I have no alternative but to sentence you as usual. You will go to prison for one calendar month.'

This was two and a half years ago, and the said provision has not yet been made. True, a feeble and half-hearted movement has been made towards accomplishing the desired object. Three or four authorized asylums for habitual inebriates are now in existence, but the largest has accommodation for no more than forty or fifty patients, and, once filled, a year or so must elapse before any more can be received. It is not long since that a wretched-looking woman named Alice Rich was before Mr. Curtis Bennett at Marylebone Court in consequence of having been found drunk and disorderly at Notting Hill.

The assistant-gaoler informed his Worship that Rich, whose age was only thirty-five, had about a hundred convictions for drunkenness recorded against her. Within the past nine months she had undergone three terms of imprisonment, two of them being for three months and one for two.

In the previous November she was sent to the sessions, but there was no inebriates' home ready to receive her, and she was therefore merely bound over, and no sooner was she released than she was arrested again for the same offence. Mr. Bennett remarked that it was still the same old story—the homes were all full up. There might, perhaps, be an 'opening' in a month's time, and as it was next to certain she would again come before him, that was the term he should sentence her to.

And the urgently required accommodation would be still more scarce had the provisions of the Act been as comprehensive as common-sense dictated they should be. Strangely enough, however, it was only female inebriates that were dealt with. That women drunkards outnumber the males who are similarly addicted is undeniable; all the same, it would be absurd to deny that among the lower classes there are hundreds of men whose constant habit it is to brutalize themselves at the public-house, wasting their wages in the process and half starving their wives and children. And not only that: these are the men who turn on their complaining wives with the ferocity of savages and barbarously ill-treat them. They are

over and over again before the magistrates charged with committing the same offence, and it is rare that the sentence passed on them exceeds three months. If the law admitted of their being dealt with as habitual inebriates, and they were as such sentenced to twelve months' 'seclusion,' it would probably teach them better manners.

Another defect in the Inebriates Act may be pointed out. According to its present provisions, a patient whose behaviour in the asylum during a period, say, of six months is satisfactory may be let out on 'ticket of leave,' which is cancelled should she meanwhile be charged with being drunk, and she is returned to the home. After a while, her good conduct justifying it, she may again be allowed at large on license, and for the second time, almost as a matter of course, she abuses the privilege and is again taken before the magistrate. Her inebriate's sentence being three years, she may have still one more chance, and should she throw it away, that brings her to the end of her tether. She is then regarded as a person whose case is hopeless, and the doors of the home are closed against her, and the police-court magistrate must do the best he can.

Such a case was before Mr. Dickinson at Thames

Court, and prisoner, a woman of violent temper, was insolent and defiant.

'Apparently,' remarked his Worship, 'you are a woman lost to all sense and decency, and are resolved to continue your disgraceful ways to the end of your life.'

To which the wretched old creature answered, with a callous laugh :

'You never spoke truer words in all your life. I mean to go to hell in my own way, and why don't you all let me do it in quick time, and without balking me?'

And, being sentenced to a month's imprisonment, she commenced singing, and went dancing out of the dock on her way to the cells.

At times long-suffering husbands appear against such women, and the tale they have to tell is pitiable to hear. Home is with them another term for perpetual misery. Probably the woman is possessed of such a fierce craving for drink that she will pawn, beg, borrow, or steal to obtain it, and, as often happens, when drunk she is a fiend that will brook no control, and is ready with her fists, with a stick, with a knife even, if such a weapon is handy for catching up, to attack anyone who attempts to check or remonstrate with her. Men

rarely prosecute their drunken wives, even when they suffer physical violence at their hands.

Can any condition in life be more intolerable than that of a hard-working poor fellow who has not only to endure all the wretchedness arising from his wife's constant inebriation, but mauling and maltreatment as well? It may surprise some people to learn that the question admits of an affirmative answer.

A working man applied to Mr. Corser at Thames Court for advice as to how he should act as regards his wife, whose increasing bad behaviour made it impossible, for his children's sake, to live with her any longer.

'She is seldom or never sober, your Worship, and she grows worse and worse. She appears to be quite reckless. She seldom washes herself or takes off her clothes. She goes to bed of nights with her clothes on, and if it was not for me the children would do the same.'

'But cannot you by any means keep the drink from her?'

'It is impossible, your Worship, while she has her liberty, and, of course, I cannot deprive her of that. There is a cellar on the premises where I live; it does not belong to me, but she learnt

that there was spirits in bottle there, and she broke down the door to get at it.'

'But is the woman in her right senses?'

'She has been so bad at times that I have had the doctor to see her, and he is ready to certify that, though she may not be pronounced insane at present, drink is fast driving her to insanity. It is a dreadful thing for the children to be with her.'

'Does she neglect the children to an extent that may be said to be hurtful to their health, or is she dangerously violent to them?'

'No, sir, I don't think that could be proved against her.'

'Then the law, I am afraid, gives you no remedy. There is nothing for it but for you to make the best of it under the circumstances. If it can be avoided I am always averse to advising husbands to leave their wives or wives their husbands, but, accepting your statement as a true one, a separation would be the best thing, perhaps. You would have to maintain her, of course.'

'I would very willingly do so, your Worship; for the children's sake I would make any sacrifice to do it. Can I make her leave me?'

'No. It is you who must leave her. You must get her to sign a proper agreement as to the sum she is willing to accept.'

'But, your Worship, I could never get her to sign anything; and as for my leaving her, that can't be done. I am in a situation of trust, on premises on which it is necessary I should reside. We have rooms allowed us, and I could not possibly leave them and retain my situation.'

The magistrate intimated that he would consider the matter, but he did not think that anything could be done to assist applicant.

Under such conditions, it must be a terrible temptation for a desperately goaded husband to take the law into his own hands, as it is termed, and give the woman a thrashing. But the woman who is so wicked as to sacrifice the happiness of husband, home, and children that she may gratify her insatiable thirst for strong potations is not unlikely to be vindictively disposed towards anybody who endeavours to check the evil propensity. She is well aware that the law's protection is all for her, and not for the man, and at times of quarrel she will not be backward in reminding him of the fact. No matter the amount of provocation, she may defy him. She may be the scourge of the poor

fellow's life, she may waste his hard earnings in a public-house, refuse to cook his meals, sell the very shoes off the feet of the little children, strip his bed of the sheets and blankets and pawn them to buy gin, come home drunk, and be found in that disgraceful state sprawling on the floor when he returns home tired with his day's work; still, under certain conditions, as shown in the case just quoted, he must put up with it all, and the law is powerless to assist him.

'I'll get drunk when I choose,' yells the inebriate vixen, 'and get the money to do it somehow, and without asking you. And you dare lay a hand on me, and I'll show you what I'll do.'

The husband may be driven to desperation by the woman's reckless dissipation, and, denied any other satisfaction, it is easy to understand how the sudden and unpremeditated blow may wait on the taunting challenge. But the man inflicts it at his peril. The woman obtains the summons against her husband, and when it comes to hearing both sides, it may be dismissed. But the odds are heavy against the aggressor. Magistrates, and very properly, have compassionate regard for bruised and ill-used women, and all the man can urge is that he was exasperated. 'But that does not

excuse you,' his Worship will tell him; 'under no circumstances may you take the law into your own hands. You should learn to control your violent temper, and the punishment you have brought on yourself on the present occasion through not doing so is fourteen days' hard labour.'

And being a wife of a bad sort, as he quits the dock she will meet his reproachful glance with a suppressed grin of malicious satisfaction, which, remembered from morning till night while the poor fellow is engaged in picking oakum, will by no means tend to improve their renewed partnership when he is again at liberty to get to honest work, and she again avails herself of her privilege of spending her share of his wages in gin.

This up to the present time has been the hopeless and highly unsatisfactory state of affairs, but, all unexpectedly, a Metropolitan magistrate has revealed a way out of the great domestic difficulty.

At the West London Court an unfortunate victim of a wife's selfishness and cruelty appeared before Mr. Rose with the same dreary old story to relate. Being sober and industrious himself, he was made wretched by the inveterate drunkenness of the woman who had sworn to love and

honour him. All that he gave her out of his hard earnings for housekeeping purposes she squandered in drink, and his so-called home, instead of being a blessing, was made hateful to him. What was he to do? Mr. Rose was ready with a suggestion, the adoption of which, it is to be hoped, will afford relief, not only to the applicant, but to all who are similarly afflicted.

'My advice is,' remarked his Worship, 'that you shut your wife out, and so drive her to take proceedings against you, when the magistrate will, no doubt, on being made aware of the circumstances, make a small order against you for her maintenance.'

It must not, however, be regarded as a foregone conclusion that the plan in question has only to be tried to be in all cases successful. Indeed, within a fortnight of the West London magistrate's raising the hopes of despairing husbands, a case was before Mr. Plowden at Marylebone Court that distinctly pointed in the opposite direction.

'I wish to know if your Worship will kindly direct a constable to come with me and compel my wife to let me into my own house.'

'Why make it a matter of compulsion? If it is only your wife who objects to your entering

your own house, make your way in somehow, and then, as master of the position, peacefully argue the matter with her.'

'Argue the matter with her, sir!' And the voice of the bald-headed man became tremulous, and his eyes filled with tears. 'You have no idea of the sort of woman she is, your Worship.'

'She gets drunk, I suppose?'

'Worse than that, your Worship.'

Mr. Plowden: 'Worse than that! Then you are right. I don't know the sort of woman she is. What does the woman do that is worse than getting drunk?'

'Well, sir, I wouldn't so much mind her getting drunk, but she never gets sober. She goes to bed drunk every night, and the only improvement in the morning is that she is able to talk, and she abuses me to that extent that I am often glad to hurry off without any breakfast. But she prevented that only a week ago.'

'What did she do? Lock you in?'

'Worse than that, your Worship. She pawned my trousers.'

Mr. Plowden: 'But how on earth did she manage that with you inside them?'

'But I wasn't up, your Worship. She got up

first, and wanted me to give her twopence for two pennorth of rum. Of course I refused, and a few minutes after she went out of the room and didn't come back, and then I found that my trousers were gone. She was off with them to the pawnshop, and I sent a boy living in the same house to look for her, and he found her in a public-house, and she gave him the pawn-ticket to bring back to me. And not only did I have to pay to get 'em out, I lost a quarter as well.'

Mr. Plowden: 'And now you say she has turned you out of the house?'

'Well, no, your Worship; it isn't quite like that. It was me who turned her out, or, rather, I wouldn't let her in, which is about the same thing. The night before last the potman at the Pied Bull brought her home drunk after the pub was closed, and I wouldn't let her in. She sat on the steps all night, and looking through the keyhole next morning when I was going out to work, I saw her there, and, thinking it safest not to disturb her, I got over the back wall. And there she was still when I came home at night. "Get up," I ses; "I want to get in." "Get in the same way as you got out this morning," she ses; "you won't go in by the street-door if I can help it." '

'And is she strong enough to prevent it?'

'Well, your Worship, she is younger than me, and I shouldn't care about a tussle with her.'

'Well, why not accept her suggestion, and get into the house by climbing over the wall? Once inside, you would only want a screwdriver to take the lock off the street-door, and after that you can go in and out as you please.'

'Yes, your Worship, and so could she. What I want is to get in myself, and keep her out.'

Mr. Plowden; 'It is a difficult case evidently. Perhaps, after all, you had best endeavour to make a compromise. If your wife is still on the door-step, go and sit down beside her and talk persuasively to her. You will probably have to yield her a point or two in her favour, but it is the best advice I can give you.'

There are magistrates who have a way at times of dealing with drunken delinquents that must occasionally deceive, not to say disgust, them. Mr. Denman is one of these.

'I can well understand,' I once heard him remark to a notorious offender, 'that in your sober moments you really regret the depth of degradation to which you have been brought.'

The woman, taking the cue, raised her ragged

apron to her eyes, and sobbingly begged for one last chance. As true as there were angels in heaven, she would make the best of it.

'Well, it is possible you mean it,' observed the worthy magistrate. Still with her apron to her eyes, prisoner curtsied gratefully. 'You shall have all the assistance I can render you. It is certain that the longer you are kept from the drink the better chance you will have in the future. You will therefore go to prison for three months with hard labour.'

Instantly the sobbing in the dock ceased, and the woman had commenced to abuse his Worship with vixenish fury when she was hurried away by the gaoler.

The same morning the same magistrate, in a similar fashion, much amazed a brawny ruffian charged with cruelly assaulting his wife.

The latter, a thin and careworn woman, reluctantly gave evidence that her husband, a coachsmith by trade, could earn thirty-five shillings a week all the year round if he chose to do so, but he seldom started work before Wednesday, and never brought home more than enough to pay the rent out of his half-week's earnings. She herself was a shirt-ironer, and when at work

earned three shillings a day, and received the money when she left at night; and, aware that she had it, he was in the habit of waiting in the street for her, and would be satisfied with not less than half the three shillings, with which he got drunk.

On the previous night, wanting all the three shillings to buy one of her children a pair of shoes, she managed to avoid him. He came home an hour afterwards, and finding that she had bought the shoes, he threw them on the fire, and then, taking the bellows, he beat her about the head and body, breaking one or her ribs and blackening both her eyes.

He had been charged on two previous occasions for similar cowardly offences, and now the poor woman begged for a separation order.

'What do you say to that?' the magistrate blandly inquired of the brutal coachsmith.

'Oh, I'm quite agreeable,' replied that individual cheerfully. 'Let it be squared that way. If it will suit her it will suit me.'

'And how much a week do you think you could conveniently afford to allow her?'

'Well, I don't know about conweniently,' returned the coachsmith, feeling the lobe of his

ear reflectively ; 'I wouldn't mind making it five shillings a week.'

And seemingly having no doubt that the handsome offer would be accepted as satisfactory, he took up his cap, and nodded to the gaoler to permit him to pass out of the dock. But, with a serene expression of countenance, his Worship raised his hand as a sign that for the present the prisoner should stay where he was.

'Yes, under the circumstances, I certainly feel justified in granting a separation order, but not on the terms suggested. It will be for the payment of twelve and sixpence weekly to the prosecutrix, to commence at the expiration of the sentence I am about to pass on you, prisoner, which is four months' imprisonment with hard labour.'

From the way the savage smith glared at his poor battered and bruised partner, had the bellows produced in court during the hearing of the case been within his reach, he probably would have thrown them at her, even though an extra four months had been the penalty to pay for the malicious satisfaction.

Are husbands and fathers of the hard-working community deteriorating in their willingness to make the most of their means of living, disdaining

to shirk a job, however toilsome, so long as by sticking to it all the week through a golden Saturday night may be assured them? Is it a fact, to speak out plainly, that the individual whose only capital is his ability to labour is less lavish of the sweat of his brow than he used to be? One may be excused asking the question when it transpires that in a morning's batch of applications for magisterial advice, at one court, three relate to indolent male heads of families.

'I wish to know, your Worship, how I am to manage my husband.'

The applicant, who addressed Mr. Fordham, sitting at North London Court, was a wiry little woman, whose turned-back gown-sleeves and arms and hands so much cleaner than her visage denoted her a washerwoman. She had seemingly been exasperated to sudden action, for she was scant of breath, and had come out without her bonnet.

'How long have you been married?' the magistrate inquired.

'Going on for eleven years now, sir.'

'And you have not yet learnt how to manage him! I am afraid it is not in my power to assist you'

'Ah! but you haven't heard what I've got to put up with.'

'Well, tell me. What is your complaint?'

'Oh, it isn't my complaint,' replied the little woman grimly. 'It is he who has got the complaint—bad, too. Laziness is the name of it.'

'What is your husband's trade?'

'He is a shoe-mender. And there he sits at home, with people bringing him jobs, and fetching 'em away again, undone, 'cept one or two just enough to provide him with beer and bacca. He can't work like he used to, he says, as too much stooping makes his nose bleed. I am just about sick of it, with four young uns to work for and keep. Am I bound to work for him as well?'

'Is he kind to you?'

'If you call it kindness, being thankful for wittles he hasn't earned. He used to work like every other man; why can't he now?'

'I really can't say. It is not a case in which I can interfere. As long as he treats you with kindness, he has an undoubted right to a share of food and shelter in his own house.'

'But isn't it my home when it is me who keeps it going?'

'Your home and his. You and he are one, you know, according to the marriage contract. If you really feel that you cannot share the home with him any longer, you may leave him to provide for yourself. But that would be a very serious step, and I don't advise you to take it. I merely tell you what you are at liberty to do.'

'Is there no other way?' asked the disappointed little washerwoman.

'No other way, I am afraid. Yes, there may be one. Do you think you could contrive to diminish his midday rations? His bleeding at the nose that prevents him working may be the result of over-feeding. It might be worth trying.'

The little woman curtsied her thanks, and replied not a word; but the quick jerking of her head, and the determined pursing of her lips denoted that the hint was not thrown away on her.

In the next case of a similar kind the ill-used wife found a readier remedy by reason of her idle husband having laid himself open to a charge of gross cruelty. According to her statement, the poor young woman had put off applying for a summons until her husband's dislike for work,

amongst his other iniquities, had brought matters to such a pass that, not only her business, but her home was in danger of being broken up.

She had been married no longer than about three years, and there was one child. For the first two years the husband, who was a plumber's labourer, worked steadily, and unfortunately a relative died, leaving him twenty-five pounds. They agreed that the money should be invested in starting a small laundry, and it proved a success.

Working hard herself, and with three women to assist her, she was able to earn about two pounds a week, but when it came to that the husband left his employment, and instead of getting up at six in the morning took to lying abed till ten or eleven. This was several months ago, and he had continued the practice ever since. He was a strong and healthy young man, but insisted on having his breakfast in bed, though he did not require it till ten o'clock. When he arose he smoked his pipe until his dinner was ready, and after dinner he dosed away the hours till tea-time, when he sallied out for an evening's amusement, for which he insisted on his wife finding the means.

But though averse himself to early rising, he

made his wife get up every morning between five and six o'clock, and if she begged to be allowed to lie a little longer he pinched her till she had to scream with the pain. Her arms and shoulders were black and blue with his finger and thumb marks.

Through his idleness and dissipation she was losing all her customers, and the rent was two quarters in arrears. The previous night the landlord had called and informed her of his intention to distrain on her goods. She meant to have told her husband about it, but when he came home he was too drunk to understand what she was saying, so she mentioned it to him as soon as he woke next morning, when he commenced to rave and swear at her, telling her it was all through her not 'hopping out of bed' of mornings the moment he ordered her to. At the same time he struck her in the face, blackening one of her eyes, and kicked her with such violence that one of her ribs was fractured. In proof of this the poor young woman produced a doctor's certificate.

There was no hesitation on the magistrate's part in this case. 'Take a summons and bring him here,' was the prompt decision; and the circumstances as stated being substantiated, her idle

husband was bereft of the luxury of breakfast in bed during the term of three calendar months.

The lengths to which good, patient, hard-working wives are capable of going to induce a husband to refrain from drunkenness was strikingly illustrated in a case that came under my notice at Lambeth Police Court.

Amongst the habitual inebriates frequently dealt with at that temple of justice was a big strong fellow named Richard Wiggins. I became so accustomed, especially on Mondays, to see Mr. Wiggins in the dock on the same old charge, that, missing him for two or three weeks in succession, I inquired of the gaoler what had become of him.

That experienced court official smilingly made answer:

'Well, sir, I've no doubt that you will be surprised to hear that for the present he has given up drinking and taken to something else that agrees with him as well, if not better.'

'What is it?' I inquired. 'Is it eating?'

'You might guess twenty times, and then be wrong,' said the gaoler. 'No, sir, as I am informed, Richard Wiggins has turned up drunkenness in favour of laziness.'

'That,' said I, 'must be bad for his wife and family.'

'Well, now you have hit on the funniest part of it. It is his wife who has given him the choice, and is only too pleased to keep him to the bargain.'

'She is a person of means, probably,' I remarked, 'and can afford to keep him in idleness for the sake of peace and quietness.'

'Quite different from that. She is a washer-woman, and goes out to work from morning till night to earn three shillings a day. As for him, he never worked for more than enough to get drunk on, and then he'd come home and knock her about and lie a-bed three parts of next day. Since he did his last fourteen days the arrangement between them is that he shall stay at home and mind the child and do the house-work while she goes out to work. It is comparatively a light job after his employment as a coal-carman, and he has given up the drink so that he may stick to it.'

I had never before met with an instance of a man being too lazy to get drunk, and, having ascertained his address from the gaoler, that same afternoon I called on him.

I found his abode in a dingy street branching

off from the New Cut, and I discovered him in the act of tidying up the fireplace and whitening the hearth. He was an able-bodied fellow, not more than thirty or thereabouts, and with shoulders of the right breadth for carrying sacks of coal, and he was down on his knees by the fender, busy with house-flannel and hearthstone. Nor was he in the least abashed at being caught in the act.

'Here I am, sir,' he cheerfully remarked, looking round to me as he spoke, with his two great fists nearly filling the little pail. 'Promise a thing and stick to it is what I say. I shouldn't think myself much of a man if I didn't.'

'Your wife is out working at the wash-tub, as usual, I suppose?'

'Oh yes, sir,' he answered complacently, and rising from his knees, his job completed, 'she's out at the wash-tub. It is her own wish that it should be so, bless her! and so as it keeps me from the drink is all she asks or expects. And I am keeping from it, and I mean to.'

'And you don't feel, Wiggins, that as yet you have strength of mind to get back soberly to your proper employment so that your wife may stay at home?'

'Well, sir,' replied Mr. Wiggins frankly, 'as a straight-forad man I couldn't say for positive. It is feeling uncertain about it that keeps me from trying it.'

'You are afraid that if you went back to your work you would be tempted to spend all that you earned at the public-house?'

'As a matter o' course, I should, sir.'

'And you don't feel the degradation of idling about at home while your wife is out at work?'

'N-o, not perticlerly. Course, I do feel a hankerin' for a half-pint when I get on to the hard parts, such as cleaning the winders and scrubbing the floor, but, not being a selfish man, all that I can put up with so as I can have a good rest afterwards, and feel able to look lively and cheerful when she comes home at night; always, mind you, with something nice for my supper. It is a pleasure to see her then, she is so thankful and happy.'

'It encourages you to keep on with the new arrangement?'

'It do, sir. I assure you that I sit here by the fireside for hours and hours smoking my pipe and strengthening my mind to keep going on as I am going.'

I should like to have told Mr. Wiggins what I thought of him ; but it occurred to me that the arrangement, outrageous as it was, was perhaps the best the poor woman could have made, so I wished him a curt 'Good-afternoon' just as, his day's work done, he was filling his pipe for a long and lazy smoke.

As far as I am aware, there is but one instance on record of a man selling the teeth out of his head to gratify his insatiable craving for drink. True, the molars and incisors in question were of the artificial sort, but it was much the same as though they had been of natural growth as far as the owner's forfeiture of the power of mastication was concerned.

John Phelan had been in better circumstances, had been a merchant, with warehouses and offices in the City, in fact ; but, arrived at the age of sixty-six, old John, through his inebriate propensities, found himself penniless and without a friend in the world.

The workhouse was his only refuge, and there he remained for six weeks ; and no doubt he would in time have become reconciled to his hard lot, but the one enjoyment of his life was denied him, and he yearned for it with a craving known

only to those who have arrived at the 'parching thirst' stage of inebriation. As already stated, he had not even a penny or a personal belonging that would sell for one—except his teeth.

In his prosperous days John Phelan's natural teeth had failed him, and he had provided himself with an artificial set that were mounted in gold and cost him five guineas. Use had made them so necessary to his existence that he would as soon have thought of parting with them as with his arms or legs, had it not happened that, after having been in the workhouse about a month, he chanced to read amongst the advertisements one relating to the purchase of old artificial teeth that were mounted in gold, and which stated that the price paid for them ranged from ten shillings to five-and-twenty.

Old John thought of his own artificial grinders, and at the same moment a desperate determination possessed him. He would leave the workhouse, sell his teeth for as much as they would fetch, and spend all the money on a prolonged 'booze' on whisky.

But before he entered on the daring adventure, he thought it would be as well to try how he could get on without his teeth, so he took them out

just before one dinner-time; but the result was by no means encouraging. It was a bread-and-cheese day, and by the time John had disposed of half a dozen mouthfuls his unprotected gums were so sore he dare not attempt another morsel. They were worse come tea-time, and so much swollen that when he tried to replace his artificial teeth they were such a pronounced misfit he had to give up the attempt.

Now he was in a nice fix; but his mind had dwelt so fixedly on whisky that he resolved not to be balked. He would leave the 'house' without further delay, and, after having one good drunk for the last, go and drown himself in the Regent's Canal, and so put an end to all his troubles.

And that very afternoon, giving as a reason that he was going to live with some friends, he quitted the parochial asylum, and, with his teeth in his waistcoat pocket, made his way to the address given in the advertisement, and there he disposed of what he had to sell for the sum of twelve-and-sixpence.

That night John Phelan experienced the felicity of being so merged in whisky that, what with the effect of it and his speech being defective by

reason of his having no teeth, being unable to obtain admission at three different sixpenny lodging-houses where he applied, he passed the wretched hours till morning curled up on a doorstep.

But he made up for it the moment the public-houses were open, and by night-time all his money was gone. Had he acted up to his first resolution he would now have hastened to the Regent's Canal, but he found another secluded doorstep instead, and it was not until early morning that, shivering and shaking, he made his way to the turbid stream that sluggishly flows through Regent's Park.

Had he paused at the brink he no doubt would have turned back. He went straight for the water, without even noticing a barge and a man leading a horse on the tow-path, and plunged in, and in the midst of a shriek on his first rising to the surface, he was hauled out by the bargeman, who handed him over, more dead than alive, to a policeman.

And a most deplorable object the wretched old drunkard looked as he stood later on that same morning in the dock at the local Police Court. He was still so cold that, had he possessed any

teeth, he must have chattered them, and, as it was, his mouth dumbly indicated chattering. But somehow he managed to tell the magistrate his pitiful story, including that part of it that related to the sale of his false teeth. He deserved to be sent to prison, no doubt, but the magistrate was merciful, and on John Phelan promising never to repeat the rash attempt, not only was he discharged, but a grant of twelve-and-sixpence was made him from the poor-box, and, through the agency of a police-constable, his teeth were restored to him, and he was taken back to Marylebone Workhouse.

CHAPTER X

POLICE-COURT SPECIALITIES

Marlborough Street—The night-birds of Soho—Many more than 'one' unfortunate—Police raids on so-called 'social clubs'—The wolves and the lambs—Ruffians who prey on women—The Brotherhood of the Badge—My disagreement with a hansom cabman—The affecting ceremony of unbadging an oft-offending Jehu—Southwark Court, and the female furies of the adjacent slums—The Court for bloodshed and brutal violence—Fleeced seamen the 'leading article' at Thames Court—Illegal pawning by poor slop workers—Marylebone and street-betting men—Their value to the Police Superannuation Fund.

ALMOST every police-court in the Metropolis is distinguished by some especial feature of magisterial business.

Marlborough Street has two specialities. It is situated in the midst of a district that includes among its inhabitants a large proportion of foreigners of shady reputation, whose means of subsistence is not conspicuously apparent. The

At the same court the inebriate and wayward cabman is so familiar a figure that it is found convenient to apportion to the Brotherhood of the Badge a regular place in the order of the morning's proceedings.

I have always entertained a kindly regard for the London cabman. Although I am unable to say that he has invariably expressed himself grateful for the extra sixpence it is my invariable practice to bestow on him, only once, to the best of my recollection, have we ever had 'words' over the matter; and, even on that occasion, it is but due to the man to mention that the unkind deed was done without him resorting to abuse or bad language.

He drove a hansom-cab, and I hired him at London Bridge Railway Station and bade him drive me to Stoke Newington. Arrived at my abode, it being somewhat late, instead of his proper fare, which was three shillings, I handed him four. He turned the coins over in the palm of his hand, and, with a reproachful wag of his head, remarked:

'Well, I weighed you up when I took you on, but I won't swear. Bad language is chucked away on some people.'

And with a look betokening that his sense of the injury inflicted on him was not unmixed with charitable hope that I might live to repent of my act of meanness, he drove dejectly away.

Meagre is the measure of merciful consideration the London cabman receives, as a rule, at the hands of the police-court magistrate. His lot (the cabman's, not the magistrate's) is far from being an enviable one. Out in all weathers, under the blazing sun of summer, and exposed to the biting winds and the rain and the frost and snow of winter, he may be as long as ten or twelve hours earning four or five shillings, half the time being probably spent in patient waiting at the cabstand, or in 'crawling' through the busier thoroughfares in hope of picking up a job.

Under such conditions, it is not very much to be wondered at should he occasionally be tempted to indulge in a glass or two more than strict sobriety prescribes. Cab-masters are, of course, aware of this, and it may be said that they are by no means unanimous in their preference for drivers who are total abstainers. They (the masters) have a saying amongst them that 'a teetotal driver makes a drunken horse.' Which may be inter-

as many as a dozen such applications will be made.

But at Thames Court every morning of the week the number of persons in attendance to make affidavit ranges from twenty to thirty. Why it should be so is difficult to explain. Possibly, familiarity with the pawn-tickets breeds contempt of care for their safe-keeping. Anyway, ticket-losers in this particular district are so numerous that the ordinary procedure has to give place to one that is more convenient and expeditious. Instead of individual applications being attended to, the pawn-ticket losers give up their forms of declaration to a court officer, after which the whole batch is ushered in, and he calls out the name of each, and when they have all responded, he asks them collectively if they solemnly declare, etc., and then they get back their 'forms,' and the court is cleared of them.

At Marylebone there is an average of street-betting charges exceeding that of any other court, which is unfortunate for the peripatetic penciller, inasmuch as Mr. Curtis Bennett, who half the time presides there, is never tired of reiterating his opinion that the lower-class bookmaker is the chief curse of the working-class community.

It is lucky that the bane in question is operative only during the season of 'flat' racing, which lasts from the middle of March until November. During the intervening months the street 'bookie' is idle. It cannot be a very lucrative business, yet apparently it is sufficiently profitable while it lasts to spoil those who engage in it for other employment after the last flat-race of the year is run. The bookie of the pave is bound to make a decent appearance while fishing for customers or they would have no confidence in him; but with no more fish to be caught he quickly moults his business plumage, and becomes a shabbily-dressed street-corner loafer, thankful for a bite and a sup to anybody who will stand it to him.

And this is worth remarking, as illustrating the irresistibility of the infatuation when a man gives himself to gambling, no matter how petty. For obvious reasons, the bookie remains always in the same district; hence it follows that those who have dealings with him see him during the winter of his discontent when he is always down at heel, so to speak, and could give no man change for sixpence; but no sooner does he blossom forth once more 'when the bell rings at Lincoln'—or in

other words, when the racing season commences with the fulfilment of the Lincoln programme—in a smart hat and coat, to purchase which he has no doubt borrowed the money, than his clients recommence to 'back their fancy,' and entrust him, without receipt even, with their shillings and half-crowns as though he had provided each of them with his banker's reference.

They are the best-paying customers the court has to deal with, and though the business they engage in is one that the law does its best to put down, it brings welcome grist to the Police Superannuation Fund. All police-court fines inflicted by the magistrates are devoted to that purpose, and it is very seldom that a street-betting man caught in the act is fined less than five pounds. Not unfrequently at Marylebone three or four offenders will be fined in one morning, the sum collected far exceeding that in which a score of average 'drunks and disorderlies' would be mulcted.

The readiness with which the penalty is paid bespeaks the game a money-making one. Why, then, it may be asked, are the operators unable to save enough to tide over the blank winter time in comfort? For this, the best of all

reasons: the street-betting man, five times out of six, is not the principal, but a person in the employment of some wary individual who provides the necessary capital, and takes the lion's share of the profits, at the same time shirking all personal risk. Should the actual law-breaker, his representative, be taken before the magistrate and fined, he has no fear as to the alternative—imprisonment—it being part of the arrangement that the master, not the man, pays all penalties a magistrate may inflict. All the same, the understanding being one that cannot be legally enforced, there is no remedy for the understrapper should bookie in the background turn sulky, and decline to pay the mulct, and the money not being forthcoming by the time the court rises, he rides away to his month of durance in the prison van.

THE END.

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